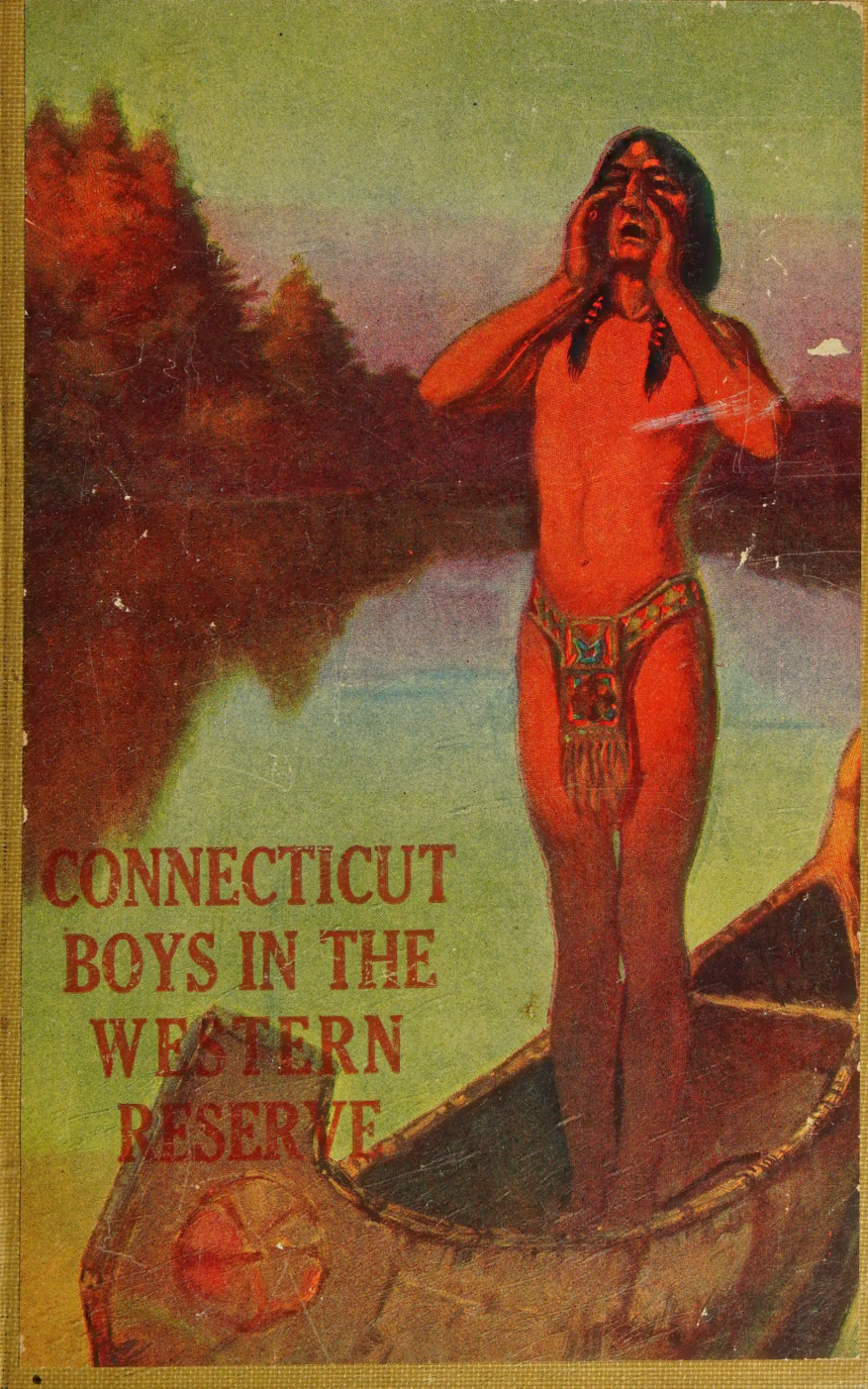
CONNECTICUT
BOYS IN THE
WESTERN
RESERVE

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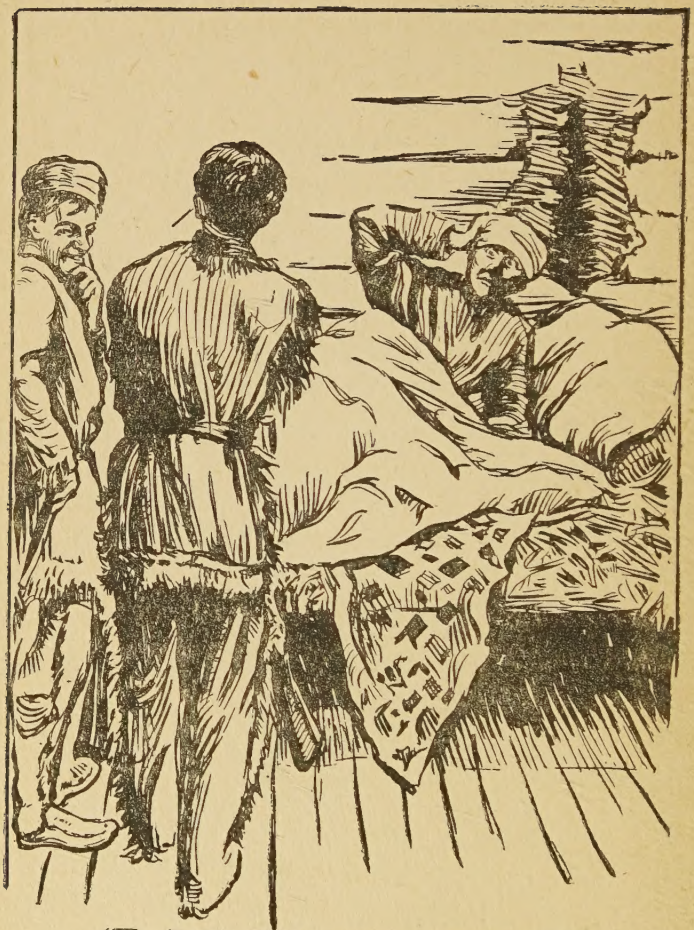

"Was I scalped?" he gasped. (See page 115)

CONNECTICUT BOYS
IN THE
WESTERN RESERVE.

A TALE OF THE MORAVIAN MASSACRE

..BY...

James A. Braden.

AUTHOR OF
"FAR PAST THE FRONTIER," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

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C

AKRON, OHIO

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CHAPTER I.

A RAINY NIGHT.

A dismally wet and cold September day had come early to a close and thick darkness had settled down an hour since, when the horse attached to a heavy, canvas-covered, two-wheeled emigrant wagon stopped, at its driver's command, before an inhospitable looking house, from one window of which a feeble light was shining. The rain splashed drearily, the wind moaned in a ghostly way about the structure whose dim outlines were just visible, and flapped the canvas over the wagon fitfully.

The barking of a gruff-voiced dog from somewhere near the house gave certain sign that the arrival of the cart had been noticed by that

animal, as a tall, broad shouldered boy sprang lightly down from the vehicle and walked briskly toward the door of the gloomy building.

"Now, never mind, Ring," spoke a young, but full and pleasant voice from the front of the wagon, as a large dog that stood beneath growled deep in its throat in answer to the barking of the other canine. Instantly the dog was quieted and at the same moment came the sound of knocking at the door of the partially lighted house. A full minute passed, and the knocking was vigorously repeated before there was a response.

"This ain't a tavern any more; we can't keep ye," said a man who put his head out, before the caller could speak.

"This is the Eagle tavern, isn't it?" the boy inquired calmly, and the light through the half-open door showed him to be a muscular youth of probably eighteen years, though the serious look about his eyes and mouth, and his dark hair gave him a somewhat older appearance.

"It used to be the Eagle tavern, but it ain't

now. Is that all?" the man in the doorway replied gruffly.

"Why, no, it is not all," the lad returned. "There are two of us with a horse and wagon and we want to stay all night. The storm is growing worse, and though we had intended to camp by the roadside, we pushed on through the mud and darkness to reach this place. We expect to pay for our lodging."

"It don't make no difference, I tell ye! We ain't keeping a public house."

"Come, come, Mr. Tavern-keeper, my friend and I have both been here before, and if we are willing to stay, you should surely be willing to keep us."

"That's the talk!" called the one who remained in the wagon, "and let's have a lantern out here, and lose no further time about it!"

The man in the door moved aside to let the light fall more directly on his caller's face.

"Yes, I rec'lect ye," he said slowly. And then, his face brightening suddenly, he added more pleasantly, "Wait a jiffy."

He closed the door and a murmur of voices sounded for a short time from within. Presently, however, the man reappeared with a tallow candle set in a round tin box full of small holes, which he carried by a ring in its top, as a lantern, and followed the young men who had summoned him, to the cart drawn up by the roadside.

"The Eagle tavern's been closed all summer and we hadn't ought to keep ye," the man explained, standing by while the two boys unhitched their horse and led the animal into the log barn across the road from the house. "Ye kin pull yer cart under this shed out o' the rain," he went on, indicating a lean-to beside the barn.

In a few minutes the horse had been fed and the host led the way into the house, entering a long, low room, where, in a fireplace, a smoky, cheerless blaze was flickering. On a table set against the wall opposite the fireplace, a candle was burning, and toward the farther end of the dingy apartment two men were

seated, their chairs tilted back in careless attitudes.

"There ain't much here to eat," the landlord said, as he motioned his guests to a settle in the chimney corner. "My wife died an' I quit keepin' a tavern. I'll git ye what I kin."

The two boys he thus ushered in did not sit down, but stood before the blaze to allow their clothes to dry; the one who had remained in the wagon while the other went to the door, turning about after a minute or two and stirring the fire till it burned more brightly. He was seventeen years old or thereabout, more slender than his companion and not so tall. His brown hair grew long, and about his blue eyes there was a twinkle of merriment, as he said: "Wood is cheap; we may as well have enough fire to do some good."

"Right you are, young man," spoke one of the two strangers still sitting in the semi-darkness. "It's a nasty night."

"Right you are," said the lad, still stirring the fire, adopting the stranger's own words.

One of the two men arose and stepping up to the blaze seated himself on the settle. He was a villainous looking fellow, his curly black hair cut short, his nose very large, red and sharp pointed, his chin unnaturally prominent, his eyes small, black, and deep-set, marks of smallpox adding further to make his face an unpleasant one. His age was not less than forty-five years.

So disagreeable, indeed, did the two boys find this man's appearance that instinctively both looked more closely to see what his companion was like. They beheld a man ten years younger than the other, though his hair was turning gray, and his hardened leather-like skin made him seem older than he was. He had fairly honest eyes, however, though he turned them away and looked steadily in another direction when he found that he was observed.

"I was just tellin' my friends here about Ichabod Nesbit bein' killed, when you chaps come along," said the landlord a few minutes later, as he came bringing in some cold meat

and a loaf of bread, which he placed on the table. Then asking his young guests to sit down and help themselves, which they proceeded to do, he went on:

"I rec'lect that you boys was sort o' interested in Nesbit, an' I heard that it was you two that brought the news East of how he was killed."

"Yes," said the older of the two lads in a disinterested way, while the other gave him a quiet pinch under the table.

"Killed by an Indian, you said, didn't you?" put in the villainous looking man.

"An Injun named Black Eagle," said the landlord.

Neither boy made any move to join in the conversation and the tavern-keeper took another tack.

"Most forgot how to be polite," he said. "I don't rec'lect your names, young men, but make you acquainted with Mr. Samuel Duff and Mr. Lon Dexter, travelers same as you be. My name's Quilling, ye know that."

It was to the name Samuel Duff that the villainous looking man answered. His better appearing companion arose as the name Lon Dexter was pronounced.

"My name is Kingdom," said the older of the two boys, rising to shake hands as the men came forward.

"And mine is Jerome," said the more slender lad, with none too much friendship in his tones.

"Going West, I take it," said Duff, trying to speak pleasantly.

"Yes," said the young man named Kingdom, as both boys reseated themselves and went on with their supper.

"So are we," he of the evil appearance continued—"Dexter and I."

"It is a great country—the Ohio country, I mean," said Kingdom, his keen, dark eyes scrutinizing the fellow who had seemed to suggest that they might travel together, while he mentally decided that he would like no such arrangement.

"Yes, a great country and a big country. We're just going to look around and see whether there would be a good chance to get hold of first-rate land to settle on when the Indian troubles are over," Duff answered.

No immediate reply being made to his words, the fellow went on in a careless tone which any one could have seen was assumed:

"But you won't catch us staying around long where the Redskins have war paint on. That man Ichabod Nesbit, we were speaking of, would probably have been living yet if he hadn't gone off to that blasted wilderness. What part of the country was he killed in, anyhow?"

"Beyond Pittsburg. Why?" quickly put in the lad Jerome, his interest aroused. For the thought came to him that Ichabod Nesbit was just such an outlaw as the fellow now inquiring about him looked to be.

"Ho! nothing in particular! You seem to be mighty suspicious, the way you ask

'Why,' " Duff exclaimed, with anger he tried not to show.

"No harm ain't be'n done, I don't see. Jest hear it rain though!" put in the other of the two men, Dexter, speaking for almost the first time. His voice was a hoarse whisper, and gave the impression that he was frightened and afraid to speak louder.

"Why," said Kingdom, "there is no secret about when and how and where the man Nesbit was killed. He had followed us all the way from this very tavern, clear across the mountains and the Ohio river. On the way West, he fired at us one night, as we were in camp, and happened to kill Northwind, the son of the Indian, Black Eagle. The long and short of it all is, that Black Eagle, after burying his son, found the trail of Nesbit and followed it—tracked him through woods and over mountains, though how he could do it is wonderful, and at last came up with him only a few minutes after Nesbit had fired on our camp a second time, killing our horse. They fought, and

Nesbit was killed, but just how or where we do not know. We did not see the fight or know anything about it until Black Eagle told it himself, months afterward, and showed the man's skull as certain evidence that he was dead."

For a little time nothing more was said. The wind howled dolefully outside and the rain beating on the roof and windows added to the feeling of melancholy which seemed to pervade the whole place. Little wonder is it that the thoughts of the two boys went back to the terrible experiences they had had in a former trip from their home in Connecticut to the wilderness beyond the western frontier of Pennsylvania. They remembered how a robber and cut-throat by occupation, Ichabod Nesbit, had attempted to relieve them of their money at this very inn—the Eagle tavern—how they had shot at him and he had then secretly followed them, mile after mile, week after week, firing at them from a distance on two occasions and at last killing their horse when they were but a few miles from the spot

where, beside the Cuyahoga river, they located and built a cabin.

They remembered, too, that Nesbit had been in search of a cousin, named Arthur Bridges, whom he would have killed had he found him, in order to palm himself off as Bridges, whom he closely resembled, and secure his property. And Nesbit was responsible from the beginning for Arthur Bridges' never having returned home after the Revolutionary war, in which he was a soldier. They had met on the road and Nesbit told Bridges that his (Bridges') mother had died and his father was cursing him and hoping never to see him again because he had joined General Washington's army. And it was only by chance that Bridges had discovered through Tom Fish, a friend who had gone in search of him, that Nesbit had deceived him most cruelly.

"The Indian—did you say his name was Black Eagle?—is quite civilized, I understand," said Duff, at last. "His home is in the East."

"More civilized than some white folks," spoke up young Jerome, remembering that the Redskin had been kind to him and Kingdom.

Duff growled an inaudible reply, in response to this thrust, and Kingdom, being tired and, moreover, wishing to avoid any trouble with this disagreeable fellow, suggested that it was time to go to bed.

The landlord, upon request of the boys, brought a candle and showed them into a small down-stairs room opening into a narrow passage-way which led to the general living room where they had passed the evening.

"I wish we had not stopped at this wretched hole," said Jerome when the boys were alone.

"Oh, I don't know about that. It is pleasanter to be here, disagreeable as it is, than to be camped along the road," Kingdom answered. "We could have slept in the wagon, but the horse couldn't, and it is such a bad night! Make the best of it, old chap."

For an hour the young friends lay awake talking of their journey and especially of the

unusual interest the two strangers had shown in the death of Ichabod Nesbit.

"I must have a drink of water," said Jerome, as Kingdom turned over to go to sleep; and slipping into his trousers he felt his way along the passage, and opened the door of the living-room. The landlord and Duff and Dexter were sitting beside the little table, their heads bent close to the candle, while they intently examined a frayed and time-worn piece of paper.

"It ain't no use, it ain't. I've studied it right side up an' wrong side up an' side ways an' length ways, an' it ain't no use!" Quilling, the landlord, was saying when Jerome's footfall attracted the attention of the men.

"Blast you, you blasted spy!" cried Duff, springing toward the boy.

"Don't repeat that, mister," was the lad's cool answer. "I was not spying on you, and don't intend to let any one call me such names."

"He was only jokin'—only jokin'," hoarsely whispered Dexter, trying to laugh.

CHAPTER II.

TALL TODD'S WARNING.

Having gotten a drink of water, as he had set out to do, Jerome quietly returned to his room. He told Kingdom what had happened and they wisely determined to sleep with one eye open. This they did, their trained senses ready to detect the first unusual sound, but nothing occurred to disturb them, and even Ring, their faithful dog, sleeping beside the bed, showed no sign of uneasiness.

"Mr. Duff and Mr. Dexter ain't up yet," the landlord explained, as he set out a scanty breakfast for the boys, when morning came. But the young friends made no comment, and

though the man stood around hoping to hear some expression from them as to what they thought of the worthy pair of whom he spoke, his curiosity was unsatisfied.

An almost perfect autumn day followed the stormy night. The sky was flecked with clouds, but between them the sun shone bright and cheery and a soft, warm wind aided in drying the muddy roads. The young emigrants, safely on their way once more, were in the best of spirits. They talked at length of the strange actions of the men at the Eagle tavern, and although they could reach no satisfactory conclusion as to the meaning of the piece of frayed paper the fellows had had, they attached not a great deal of importance to it—far, very far, less than it deserved, as they were destined in time to learn.

A long journey lay before these two boys, whom readers of "Far Past the Frontier" will have recognized as Return Kingdom and John Jerome, on their way once more to the wilderness beyond Fort Pitt or Pittsburg. Six

months earlier they had left their little cabin in the forests to return to their home in Connecticut. In company with them was Big Pete Ellis, whom they had rescued from the Indians, he and Return having escaped together from a band of Mingoes, who, headed by a Delaware Indian, Big Buffalo, had attacked the boys' cabin and after a desperate fight captured Kingdom. Also with the lads when they went back to Connecticut, it will be remembered, was Tom Fish, the woodsman whose friendship they had formed on their first trip West, and Arthur Bridges, Tom's friend, who was a cousin of Nesbit, the outlaw. Bridges had suddenly appeared one evening at the cabin, and as it had been believed that he was dead, there was great rejoicing. Gladly he had gone with Tom Fish and Kingdom and Jerome to Connecticut where for years his mother had been living upon the hope that he would sometime return.

It was in May that the boys and their friends had gone from the savage country where they

had built their cabin; and now having worked as harvest hands during the summer, they were headed once more for the land of the Delawares, their cart packed with a well selected stock of supplies for their own use and a variety of articles for trade with the Indians.

On their previous venture, when they had first set out to make homes for themselves in the new country, the two friends had done well as traders; and though this time they meant to give more attention to clearing land for farms, they knew that the Indians would receive them more kindly if they came with merchandise to exchange for furs, while they would be quite unwelcome if they came only as settlers. Such at least, had been their former experience and, notwithstanding the trouble they had had with the Mingoes and Big Buffalo, they hoped to have no further difficulty, as Hopocon, or Captain Pipe, as the white men called him, the chief of the Delawares, had promised his protection when they had paid him for the land on which they built their cabin.

Indeed, they were certain that Big Buffalo would not have dared lead the Mingoes against their cabin, had it not been that Captain Pipe and most of his warriors had gone to the far northwest for fighting which was expected to take place there.

From Connecticut to Ohio in these days is not a very long journey. It was different in the year 1791 when Return Kingdom and John Jerome were making the trip over rough roads, through the forests and an almost unbroken wilderness, constantly growing wilder, as they progressed, and the way more dangerous, especially after passing Pittsburg. Steadily, however, they continued on. The weather was for the most part pleasant, and though the evenings were cool, blazing camp fires gave all the warmth desired.

Only one night after leaving the Eagle tavern did the boys spend under roof, for there were few inns along the way and as the borders of civilization were left farther and farther behind, none whatever. No adventure of impor-

tance befell them, however, until they reached Pittsburg, then a rough frontier hamlet built up about the fort from which it took its name. They had learned the road on their previous journey, and though a number of mishaps had occurred, including a hard fall John had had from a great rock he climbed in hope of getting a shot at a bear which had trotted across the rough trail some distance ahead of them, none of these were serious.

And thus, in the late afternoon of a hazy October day the young men drove slowly into the frontier settlement which would be the last sign of civilization they expected to see for a long time to come.

It might be years before they would return to Connecticut again. Return Kingdom, being an orphan, who had known no home except as the bound boy of Henry Catesby, had few near friends there. Mrs. Catesby and her daughter, Mary, had been very kind to him after Mr. Catesby's death, but they were now living in town that Mary might attend school. Captain

William Bowen, an old friend, was the only other person, unless it was Pete Ellis, who cared much about him, he thought. Why should he wish to return? There was only one other tie to bind him to Bruceville, his boyhood home. His mother's grave was in the little churchyard there. She had been dead a long time, but he loved her memory. His father, killed in the Revolutionary war, he had never known.

As for John Jerome, he was one of a large family. His father was poor. Their little farm would scarcely support them all and work was scarce. That he would be missed John knew, but he also knew that his chances of getting along—of making something of himself—were better in the newer country. He would go home some day to visit, surely, but he had set out to make his own way, and it might be years before the opportunity again to see those he loved, would come.

Maybe both boys were thinking of the friends left behind, as very soberly they drove

into Pittsburg. Their heavy, covered wagon drawn by one strong horse attracted no little attention as they passed down the main street of the rough, stockaded town of brick and log buildings, and with the easy familiarity of the early times many called out to them in a friendly, hospitable way to ask whence they came and whither they were going. There were words of astonishment, and grave shaking of heads when the travelers answered that they were bound for the unbroken West. Said one man in a worn-out soldier's uniform:

"You'll be safe enough if you go down the river with some big party, but you'll be scalped, sure, if you go toward Sandusky Plains, as you say. Why, there's terrible times! General St. Clair left Fort Washington not six weeks ago to march into that country and there'll be murderin' an' scalpin' to beat all get out! St. Clair was here in the spring, an' all summer long he has been recruitin' at Fort Washington for the biggest kind of fightin'; an' it's bound to come just as soon as he gets into the

Redskins' country. He's got two boys o' mine with him—young fellers 'bout same age as you, but I ain't worried half like I would be if they was goin' off by themselves, not a hundred miles west o' here!"

As the boys drove up to the public house where they had stopped on their former trip to the West, they were recognized by a number of men seated on a split log bench just outside, smoking their pipes.

"Thunder an' lightnin'! Where ye goin'?" exclaimed one of the loafers, a great, lanky fellow known as Tall Todd, as Kingdom and Jerome, rather enjoying the excitement their appearance caused, stepped up to shake hands with their acquaintances.

"Goin' back to yer cabin beyond old Fort Laurens? By jinks, ye ain't! It's sartin death to both of ye. Wasn't ye both purty near murdered an' one of ye purty near burned to the stake? D'ye s'pose them Mingoes will hev forgot that ye killed three or four of the war party at yer cabin? D'ye s'pose that Big Buf-

falo devil will hev forgot his grudge ag'in ye? By jinks! a Redskin don't never fergit these things! Fellers, we had all orter be hung fer murder if we let these young shavers throw their lives away, this here way!"

The vehemence with which Todd spoke, refusing to be interrupted, though both Kingdom and Jerome tried to break in on his exclamations, caused the boys some uneasiness; not so much for fear of their safety beyond the border, as for the possibility that their friends would be unpleasantly insistent that they must abandon their trip. They realized that their undertaking was hazardous, but they relied on their ability to make peace with the Indians as they had done before, and they were certain that if Captain Pipe, the Delaware chieftain, were in his village, a few miles from which their cabin stood, Big Buffalo would not dare attack them again. When their horse had been led away to the stable, and all were seated before the door of the house which did duty as

tavern, the young men explained these things to Tall Todd and the others.

"What was Tom Fish an' Bridges doin' that they let ye come 'way off here by yerselves?" suddenly asked Todd, who had been shutting his eyes and mouth tight, and shaking his head most emphatically, in answer to everything the boys had said.

"Oh, they said to wait until winter and they would come with us. But we did not agree to that, and as they lived so far away, we did not see them again. It was in July that we saw them last. When we got ready, we started. If they had come it would have been only for a little hunting, and we were afraid they would think they were obliged to go with us, if we sent them word."

"It was only last week that a white man was found dead and scalped just beyond old Fort McIntosh," said an elderly man, quietly. "About a month ago a chap named Keaton was tomahawked and his scalp taken, not a day's march from this very spot. Both were killed

in a mysterious way, too—one shot from ambush, the other attacked while he was cooking himself a meal; and he never knew what hit him, from all appearances, they say. It looks mighty bad. I've been through the woods a good many times, and I don't get scared at my shadow, but honest to goodness I mean it, when I say that I wouldn't care to go a great ways into the Ohio country alone, now."

"By jinks, it is queer how them two fellers was killed, ain't it?" put in Tall Todd. "An' it jest reminds me o' ol' man Crane that was killed the same way four days after he left here for the Moravian settlement. Nobody knew how, nor nothin'. Ye remember some fellers comin' up river picked up his carcass. Not a thing he had was touched. Only his bullets an' powder was gone—an' his hair. His gun an' knife—everything else was layin' jest as he fell!"

"Well, who did it?" demanded John Jerome, quite abruptly.

"That's jest it! Who did it?" Todd answered.

"There's a story told," said the quiet, elderly man, "that a Redskin who got away at the time of the massacre of the Christian Indians at the Moravian settlement, ten years ago, come next March, has lately come back to these parts and kills every white man he sees, on sight. A couple of hunters and traders coming in here from Kentucky told the tale. We don't know how true it is."

"There ain't nothin' of it, I'll bet a gun," said Todd. "I've heard the yarn, an' it don't stand to reason. 'Cause as you jest said, Eli, the Moravians was killed ten years ago, come March, an' that score was all settled when Crawford was burned. An' right there, youngsters, is somethin' to put in yer nightcaps, when yer countin' on the friendship of that ornery Delaware, Captain Pipe, by jinks! He was one of the critters that burnt Colonel Crawford!"

"Yes, we knew that before we ever met him,"

said Kingdom cheerfully, lest his friend Jerome should be depressed by these alarming reports.

"I only started out to say that the killin' of the Moravians was so long ago, that it ain't likely any Injun has just now started out to hunt scalps and satisfaction on account of it," Todd replied, somewhat taken back by the young traveler's cheery reply to his doleful warning against Captain Pipe.

The sun had gone down as the men and boys were talking and now the guests at the place were called to supper. Only one of those who were sitting outside arose and went in with the boys. The others, being there only as loungers, remained where they were or went to supper elsewhere.

The man who accompanied Kingdom and Jerome to the table had little to say, but ate of the roast venison and corn bread which was placed before them, silently. He was a genteel appearing person, of about sixty years, wearing a wig and a riding suit of fine texture. His

smoothly shaven face bore marks of refinement though there was a certain look of dissipation about him. He had not spoken outside and the two boys had not learned his name or business, though they knew from his sombre dress that he was a Quaker.

"I tell you, Ree, the stories of those chaps being killed so mysteriously bothers me more than anything else," said John Jerome to his friend. "Honestly, I would think Ichabod Nesbit was still alive, shooting at people from behind, and all that, if I didn't know positively that Black Eagle killed him."

The stranger at the opposite side of the table gave a sudden start,—a start as if an unseen hand had struck him on the back, as the name of Nesbit was mentioned. He cast a quick, intent look toward the two young friends, and perceiving that his agitation had been noticed, put his hand before his mouth and coughed violently, plainly trying to make believe that some obstruction of his throat caused his sudden disturbance.

CHAPTER III.

A MYSTERY OF THE FOREST.

Much as Kingdom and Jerome wondered what interest this well dressed stranger had in Ichabod Nesbit, they were too polite to ask any questions, unless they were first spoken to; but their thoughts turned naturally to the frayed and old piece of writing which John had seen in the possession of the men at the Eagle tavern. They recalled how interested those men had been in learning just where Ichabod Nesbit was killed, and that Duff and Dexter had said they were on their way West.

Yet, much as they tried, neither of the boys

could suggest a reason for the interest in the death of the dead robber which seemed to have so suddenly risen. They discussed the subject at much length, sitting alone in the moonlight that evening, on the heavy shafts of their wagon, beside the barn, when they had seen to it that their horse was fed and their dog had a comfortable place for the night on a blanket beneath the cart, insuring the perfect safety of the vehicle and its contents.

The lads had not seen Tall Todd after supper, but as they were going into the house to go to bed, he met them near the door and urged them most seriously to give up their plan to go on into the wilderness alone.

Todd was a good natured, kindly man and undoubtedly meant well by his friends, but by habit he spoke in an extravagant manner, and the young men believed that many of the alarming statements he made were exaggerated —either by himself, quite unintentionally, owing to his manner of speaking, or by those from whom he had heard them. They thought

most seriously, however, of the report given by the quiet, elderly man, Eli Hopp, concerning the mysterious murders which had taken place along the extreme frontier, and prudence bade them investigate before venturing into the almost trackless forest alone. They probably would have remained in Pittsburg several days or more for this purpose, but for a remark made by the proprietor of the public house at which they remained over night, next morning.

"Tall Todd says you chaps have decided to stay here awhile and maybe wait for some party goin' down river, to go along with."

The words fired Kingdom's pride. He was usually a cool, thoughtful lad; and though he showed no resentment or injured self-esteem in his tones, now, he answered instantly:

"No, he must be mistaken. We not only did not say that, but we are leaving to-day to go on to the cabin we built on the Cuyahoga river."

"We have corn and other crops to harvest, if there is anything left of them. We had quite

a farm, you know, when we left there last spring," put in John Jerome jocularly.

The landlord's face grew serious and he began telling of the Indian disturbances all along the border; but Kingdom adroitly turned the conversation in such a way that he was able without seeming over-curious, to inquire about the well dressed stranger who had sat at table with them the night before and had been so disturbed by mention of the name of Ichabod Nesbit.

"By vum, partner, you've stumped me," the man replied. "That fellow came along here on horseback day before yesterday, engaged his keep, carried his saddle bags to a little room I let him have, as though they was both full of gold—he watched them that close—and this morning he paid his reckoning, got on his horse and away he went, saddle bags and all. Tall Todd couldn't get anything out of him, so I knew 'twan't any use my tryin', though he did tell me what he didn't tell Todd, and that was, that his name was Theodore Hatch and that he

was a surveyor. But bless you! I don't believe that. I think he's a British spy, that's what I think!"

"Pretty dangerous for him to be around here, if he is," said young Jerome, bristling up as though he would personally assault the gentleman the next time they met.

"The woods are full of British from Detroit," the landlord went on. "Talk about the war being over, what are the pestiferous Redcoats always setting the Indians against our settlers so, for? We will have to set about licking them out of their boots again, the way they are behaving! But what most of all makes me think this Mr. Theodore Hatch is a Britisher is that he rode off down the river right toward bad Injun country alone. He wouldn't dare do it, if he wasn't a Britisher and friendly with the Redskins. And what did he have in them saddle bags, do you suppose? He had gold for the Mingoes and the Delawares and the Wyandots and every red moth-

er's son of the savages, he had. Now that's what I think!"

The two boys did not mention the stranger's agitation of the night before, but they could not understand how a British spy could have any interest in Ichabod Nesbit, and as they talked the subject over by themselves, they concluded that on that point the landlord was probably mistaken.

It was true, nevertheless, that then and for many years afterward there were agents of the British government going among the Indians, rousing them to deeds of violence against the American settlers. British soldiers helped in the defeat of General St. Clair by the Indians that very fall of 1791,—only a month later than that day when Kingdom and Jerome, some time after their talk with the landlord, said goodbye to him and to Tall Todd and others they knew, and set forth again upon their journey on into the western wilds.

Todd was still loud in his declarations that it was nothing less than murder to permit the

boys to continue into the wilderness, but their determination overbalanced all his objections and, though cautioning them repeatedly, other men really admired their pluck, as they watched the two friends drive slowly away.

"We will reach the Cuyahoga river within two weeks if we have good luck, Ree," said John. "That will give us all the time we need to get our corn harvested, if there is any of it left, and to get our little house all in good shape for winter before cold weather comes."

"I think we will be able to gather some nuts, there are plenty of hickory-nuts and butternuts, too, along the river and back among the hills."

So with the most hopeful conversation the boys passed the time. Had they fully realized the dangers which would surround them they could not have been so care-free. They knew that they must keep their wits about them and their eyes open wide, and this they did; but they were far from expecting the adventures which were in store for them.

The roads east of Pittsburg had been scarcely worthy of the name, but west of that frontier settlement there were practically none. Neb—short for Nebuchadnezzar—the big black horse the lads drove, had all he could do in many instances to pull the well loaded cart up the little hills which were encountered, and through the swampy places which must now and then be crossed. The trail followed was the same as that taken by the boys upon their previous journey West, the preceding fall, and the work done at that time in opening a roadway where it was impossible otherwise for the cart to pass, stood them in good stead now. But at best their progress was slow, and Colonel Boquet, whose famous Indian expedition many years earlier, traveled in part the same course as that these two sons of Connecticut were now taking, moved as fast as they did, though he made but from seven to ten miles a day.

For several miles, soon after leaving Pittsburg, the trail the boys followed kept them

close to the Ohio river. There they discovered the tracks of a horse which had preceded them. Rightly they guessed that the hoof prints were those of the steed of the mysterious stranger who had called himself Theodore Hatch.

"I wish we could overtake him," said John, speaking of the tracks they saw.

"It is strange that he should be going into this country alone and with practically no baggage," said Kingdom. "I can't make out what he's up to, unless it be true that he is a British agent. Of course it might be that he is a missionary going to the Moravian villages, but he did not look much like one."

"I should say not. He looked like a soldier, I thought—an army officer dressed up as a Quaker."

The prospect that the boys might fall in with the mysterious stranger seemed to increase daily. Though he undoubtedly traveled faster than they, it was apparent that he was pursuing the same general course as themselves and much the same trail. They saw places where

he had encamped for the night, and often during the day the tracks of his horse. Still there was nothing to indicate the man's identity.

It was late in the afternoon of the sixth day after leaving Pittsburg. The young travelers had found level land and comparatively easy traveling that day, and having gone a long distance, were casting about for a camping place.

"I'll forge ahead and see if there is running water in the little valley yonder," said John. "If there is, we need go no further."

Hastening forward, he came to the edge of the hill sloping down to the shallow gully of which he had spoken. He heard the trickle and splash of a stream of water, and in another moment would have turned to go back, but his quick eye caught the outlines of a horse's flank among some low bushes near the brook, and he paused.

Carefully he watched but the animal did not stir. Ree was not more than a hundred yards away, and hurrying to him, John told of the discovery.

"It must be our Britisher," said Kingdom, thoughtfully, "so few of the Indians have horses. But we will soon find out. Come on."

Leaving their cart where it was, for Neb could be trusted not to run away, the boys walked with as great a show of unconcern as possible down into the valley. They took pains to speak to each other in tones moderately loud, as though they were looking only for a place to camp, hoping to attract the stranger's attention. But their approach seemed entirely unnoticed. They could see only the flanks and back of the horse which was standing among the low bushes, and were somewhat surprised to notice that the animal was saddled. So perfectly still did the creature stand, too, they were puzzled more and more.

Suddenly the horse raised its head, looked backward with great, sorrowful eyes for a moment, then with a low, pitiful whinny turned and trotted toward the boys.

"Something's wrong here," said Kingdom, beneath his breath. "My goodness, I hope—"

The sentence was cut short by John speaking to the dapple gray that had now come close up to them, plainly doing its best to talk.

"Show us what it is—what's the matter, old fellow?" said Jerome, patting the horse's forehead.

Kingdom did not wait for an answer to his companion's question, but stepped quickly forward among the underbrush. He pushed his way through to a small, clear space beside the stream, and as he reached it a little cry of surprise and dismay escaped him. Then swift as a deer he leaped to the center of the open space, and in another instant was kneeling beside the body of—Theodore Hatch, the Quaker.

The man lay face upward upon the leafy ground, the pallor of death upon his cheeks, the scalp cut from his head. Beside his body the ground was ploughed deep by the hoofs of the horse, showing clearly how the faithful beast had watched and waited for a word from the master who could not speak. A few feet distant were the dead ashes of a tiny fire, and a

small coffee dipper burned black still setting among them, its contents long since evaporated.

"Oh, Ree!"

John Jerome could say no more as, followed by their faithful dog and the stranger's horse, he hastened through the brush to his friend's side and at a glance saw what was there.

"He's alive—sure as the world, the body is still almost warm!" cried Ree in an undertone, and seizing the blackened dipper, filled it at the brook and bathed the stranger's death-like face.

"See if there is brandy or anything in his saddle bags, John," he next commanded. "Oh, if we can save him!"

Instead of taking the chance of finding nothing to the purpose among the stranger's baggage, John dashed away across the valley and up the hill to their cart. He knew there were restoratives in a small medicine chest they carried beneath the seat of that vehicle, and in a minute or two he had selected what he wanted and returned. He found that Ree had

loosened the stranger's collar and placed his own coat beneath his head.

"Where is the wound, Ree?" he asked in a whisper.

"I haven't looked," Kingdom answered, drawing open the stranger's mouth and putting between his lips a tiny quantity of the stimulant Jerome had brought. "Help rub his hands."

As both boys pressed and chafed the stricken man's fingers, palms and wrists, they felt a feeble warmth in them— so feeble, indeed, that they feared their task was hopeless. But they worked on and on, again adminstering a portion of the stimulant. At the end of twenty minutes they could see that freer circulation of blood had been established and were hopeful.

A very little later the stranger's eyelids fluttered and opened. His horse, which had watched, with almost human intelligence, everything that had been done, gave a soft, low whinny of gladness.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LONE INDIAN.

"Steady, Phœbe," murmured the stranger in a dazed, uncertain way, recognizing the voice of his faithful mare, but not realizing where he was. "Sweet Phœbe," he whispered again, his eyes closing dreamily as the horse answered to his words with a delighted little neigh.

"Out of his head," whispered John Jerome in tones of sympathy.

"He must have lain here since last evening, at least," Ree answered, "and his horse has not moved from the spot. He had probably ridden up here to camp for the night and had not even

unsaddled his mare when he was shot. We must keep our eyes wide open, old chap."

"It is just such another sneaking murder as they told about at Pittsburg, Ree."

"You go back and bring up the cart, John. We may as well camp right here. It is the safest spot we can find, according to the old saying that 'lightning doesn't strike twice in the same place.'"

John hurried away to carry out this suggestion, while Kingdom prepared to build a small fire, taking the precaution to dig a hole in the earth for that purpose, and covering this nearly over with strips of green bark that the flame would be concealed and not bring the Indians down upon them.

In a short time John returned with Neb and the wagon and with blankets and fur robes a comfortable bed for the wounded stranger was soon made. While one lad prepared supper, then, the other unharnessed and unsaddled their own and the Quaker's horse and tethered them by short ropes where they might drink or

graze along the bank of the stream. It was apparent that the dapple gray had eaten nothing during the long watch over its wounded master for now the animal drank and ate most greedily.

A sort of broth, not unlike beef tea, was prepared from venison for the sick man and though the boys persuaded him to swallow some of it, he was still delirious and knew nothing of where he was or what had happened.

A more thorough examination of the stranger's condition revealed the fact that he had been shot through the left side, just over the heart, and either in falling or from the butt of a rifle or some similar instrument had received an ugly wound on his head, just back of his right ear. These injuries, added to the fact that his scalp had been carried off, made it quite miraculous that he was still alive.

"But I have heard of men living after having been scalped," said John. "Poor fellow!"

"It's a bad business; but we must pull him through," Kingdom replied with determina-

tion. "I'll watch him and the camp till midnight or after. You get some sleep, John, while you can."

As Jerome had fully expected, though he knew it was useless to remonstrate, Ree did not call him until almost daylight. Getting up, he hitched up Neb and saddled the stranger's horse, which came up to him with perfect gentleness when he called "Phœbe," the name he had heard the master use. A little later he broiled some venison steaks, and then called Ree to breakfast.

Theodore Hatch, if such was the stranger's name, though the boys doubted it, had been very restless during the night. Often in his delirium he had spoken of a letter and twice had mentioned the name of Ichabod Nesbit. How so gentlemanly appearing a man could be connected with the dead robber was more than the boys could guess, though they now considered it certain that he, as well as the precious pair of rogues they had met at the Eagle tav-

ern, had some mysterious interest in the man whom the Indian, Black Eagle, had killed.

As the stranger was still unconscious Ree and John had no fear of giving offense as they spoke of these things in his presence. Indeed, he had not the least understanding of what was taking place around him.

How to continue their journey, carrying the sick man with them, was considerable of a problem for the young travelers, as their cart was already heavily loaded; but they solved the difficulty by making a pack-horse of the stranger's mare, thus providing room under the canvas of their covered wagon to prepare a bed for the injured stranger. They raised him up and placed him upon the blankets with much effort but successfully, and before the sun was an hour high, were once more on their way.

Fifty miles ahead of them was the lonely cabin by the Cuyahoga river. A somewhat greater distance on the backward trail was Pittsburg. To the south and west almost an

equal distance was the only other semblance of civilization in all the surrounding wilderness—the missionary settlement of the Moravians.

Whether to take the wounded man to the latter place or back to Pittsburg or straight on to the cabin was a question the boys discussed at some length. The result was their decision to push on toward the Cuyahoga, and before nightfall they had traveled a good twelve miles. They saw no sign of an enemy during the day or the night which followed. The stranger continued insensible of all that was taking place, though he called out frequently, often speaking to his horse, his tones showing the deepest love for the animal. And the mare, pricking up her ears at every sound of her master's voice, exhibited for him an attachment far beyond anything of the kind the boys had ever seen.

It may have been this very love the unhappy animal had for its stricken master which resulted in the mare's giving the alarm when the two boys had almost forgotten the dangers

constantly surrounding them. For suddenly, as the sun was going down in the afternoon of the second day after the discovery of the unconscious form of Theodore Hatch, when preparations were being made to camp in a convenient gully, the horse sniffed the air and snorted and neighed violently.

Quick to realize that something was wrong, Kingdom leaped for his rifle, and had no more than secured the weapon when a bullet shrieked close to his shoulder and buried itself in a tree behind him.

"Down, John!" Ree called, but not heeding the command, Jerome, who had gone a few rods away for water, sped forward to the camp before seeking shelter behind a tree trunk.

Vigilantly both boys watched for a sight of the would-be assassin. They could see nothing but a streak of smoke curling up in the direction from which the shot had been fired. Several minutes passed, and though no sound of footsteps was heard, there came just as suddenly as before, from another direction, the

crack of a rifle and a bullet speeding so near John Jerome's head that he dropped flat on the ground.

"It looks as if we were surrounded," said Kingdom coolly, as John called out that he was not hurt.

The stranger's dapple gray was trembling with fear, though Neb, the cart horse, was not in the least disturbed.

"There's more than just a different degree of intelligence to cause that," whispered Kingdom, crouching behind a tree and cautiously peering out, John having called attention to the behavior of the horses. "I'll venture to say that the Redskins around us now are the same that scalped the stranger, and the horse knows it."

No further sign of the attacking party was seen. What had become of the foe or foes neither Ree nor John could guess, and though, when the twilight had given way to dense darkness, they took turn about in making a half dozen scouting expeditions to learn if possible

where the enemy was, and what might be expected from that source, no trace of savage or savages could be discovered.

Puzzled as they were, neither boy lay down to sleep that night, nor did they build a fire, whose light might make them easy targets.

While it was still dark Neb was hitched up, the still unconscious stranger in the cart made as comfortable as possible, and with the first light of the dawn of another day, the young emigrants were pushing on farther and deeper into the wilds, undaunted by the night's experience.

All possible care was taken to guard against surprise, however, and with much coaxing and petting and painstaking instruction Ring, the big, yellow half-mastiff, was taught to give up the place he liked best, close beside Neb, for which horse he showed a deep friendship, and follow along a hundred yards or so in the rear. Ree went ahead an equal distance, except when it was necessary to help John clear the way of trees or logs for the cart to pass, and

John himself kept a sharp lookout on either side, while driving.

So the day passed and nothing occurred further to alarm the two boys or retard their advance. But they reminded one another that they must not relax their watchfulness.

They hoped and fully believed that when they reached the country about their cabin—with all the woods near which they were well acquainted, their trouble would be at an end. If Captain Pipe, the Delaware chief, were in his village, he would permit no attack to be made upon them by Big Buffalo or any other of his tribe, and there would be only the wandering Mingoes to fear. Some of these and many others the lads had traded with and knew personally. A few presents would renew their friendship, and all would be well.

Until the cabin was reached, however, there were many dangers to be reckoned with, and these were increased by the fact that they were trying to save the life of the, to them, almost unknown man, who might have enemies they

knew not of, and who could not help them one bit, while positively delaying their progress by adding to their load and the care with which they must travel, on his account.

Camp was made, the evening following the mysterious attack, in the center of a considerable open space, nearly bare of trees, which may have been at one time an Indian corn field. The horses were picketed close to the wagon and a defense of brush and small logs was built to a height of a few feet all about the cart. The wagon's contents were then so arranged that the wounded man, who, though still delirious, seemed to be gaining in strength, was protected from stray bullets by boxes and other articles piled at either side of him.

"It seems actually foolish to go to all this trouble," was Ree Kingdom's comment as he surveyed the completed task.

Bang!—pr-r-r-r-s-s-st! A bullet whizzed through the low breast-works and flattened itself on the iron tire of the cart, close to John's left elbow.

"Look! There he goes!" cried young Jerome, and leveled his rifle at an Indian who leaped from tree to tree with most astonishing speed, traveling in a circle about the camp at a distance of eighty or ninety yards, loading his rifle as he ran, with the greatest dexterity.

In another moment, as he thought the chance was favorable, John fired. A second later Kingdom also let drive, but all to no purpose, for the next second there came from the side of the camp opposite that from which the first bullet had flown, another to keep it company, splitting a spoke in one of the cart's wheels.

No sooner had he fired this second time than the Indian disappeared in the depths of the woods.

"Land o' Goshen! What does the Redskin mean?" exclaimed John, as both boys saw him fleeing away.

"He's the same fellow that fired at us last night. Look how nervous this poor mare is. That proves it if nothing else does," answered Kingdom, boldly rising from behind the brush-

work defenses, and patting the terror-stricken horse of the stranger.

"And did you see him run?" John added. "I've heard people talk of horses going like a streak of lightning, but I never saw anything on legs get over the ground the way that buck did. I wonder, now, how long he intends keeping up this game!"

Before Ree could answer the voice of Theodore Hatch was heard loudly calling, "Nay, do not shoot! Thou art my friend. Hast thou the letter, Ichabod—Ichabod Nesbit?"

They were the most connected and intelligible words the stranger had uttered, though often in his unconsciousness he had called out, but usually in a disconnected, incomprehensible way.

"Ichabod, dost thou not know me? Thou art not dead, Ichabod! Ah, I was deceived. They told me thou wert killed by an Indian in the forest."

The boys looked questioningly one to the other. Their thoughts ran back to the frayed

letter the men at the Eagle tavern had had, and back farther still to the death of Ichabod Nesbit at the hands of Black Eagle.

"I believe he is better," said Kingdom, referring to the stranger. "His brain is clearer, though he doesn't know anything. I'll fix him up some fresh medicine."

By turns the two boys slept and watched the long night through. As before, the mysterious enemy gave no further trouble after twice firing upon the camp, and another day came and passed without incident.

Fearful of a repetition of the attack of the two preceding evenings, the young travelers made camp early this day that they might make a more secure defense than before, ere nightfall. This work they completed to their satisfaction while the sun was still shining.

The rise of ground on which they had halted gave them an advantage over their foe which they had not had before. Impatiently they watched and waited for the expected appearance of the lone savage.

"The third time's the charm, they say," remarked John, with an uneasy little laugh. "I believe we will get him or he will get us, this time."

Kingdom did not answer, and the minutes slipped slowly by. The sun was just disappearing from view, like an immense ball of red among the western trees, when the Indian came.

Both boys caught sight of him at the same moment, standing on a hill-top across a rugged little valley from themselves, quietly surveying them. As he was between them and the fading light, they saw his face, painted a bright red, and his buckskin clad figure most distinctly; and both were certain that a belt which hung loose about his waist was adorned with human scalps.

For several seconds the young savage stood gazing vacantly toward the lads. Then he saw that he was observed. Quick as magic, and as mysteriously, he disappeared.

CHAPTER V.

HIDDEN TREASURE.

"He will not come back tonight," was Ree's quiet comment, when the savage vanished.

"Great guns, but he's swift!" exclaimed John, more excitedly.

"He knows we are expecting him, and we will have no trouble to-night," said Ree, and time proved that he was right.

Early next morning the boys did have visitors, however. Two strange Indians strode up to their camp as they were preparing to move. They were the first the young men had seen in the wilderness, but they appeared friendly and remained and talked for some time.

The boys learned from the savages that nearly all the Redmen of the country had gone off to the northwest to join with the Delawares and others already there, in fighting which was expected. The Indians had kept a careful watch on the movements of General St. Clair and his troops, who, even then, were marching into the territory which now comprises northwestern Ohio, and a battle was looked for at any time.

These two Indians did not know, however, or declined to say, whether Big Buffalo, who had made the boys so much trouble on their first trip into the wilderness, had gone to join Captain Pipe and the other Delaware warriors. They likewise professed ignorance when John, in language not exactly diplomatic, demanded to know who the young Indian, who had twice fired upon them was. Shrugging their shoulders, the savages showed a desire to talk about other things, and both Ree and John were convinced that the fellows knew more than they cared to acknowledge.

For friendship's sake the young pioneers gave each of the savages a small present as they separated, and the latter promised to send other Indians whom they met to trade with the young men as the hunting season progressed. However, as so many of the Redmen had gone off to the expected scene of war, the boys realized at once that their work as traders would not be so profitable as it had been the previous winter; but, on the other hand, they would, on that account, have more time for hunting and trapping, themselves, and could also work with less frequent interruptions in the many tasks necessary to the improvement of the land for which they had paid Captain Pipe.

The wounded stranger had become more and more restless during the journey of this day, but not once did he come to his senses. Ree and John gave him the best care they could and at the same time made all haste possible, believing that if they could but reach their cabin and place the sick man on a fairly comfortable bed, they could save his life. Never-

theless it was necessary to make camp some time before sundown to be on their guard against the return of the supposed assailant of the stranger, and this they did.

But the wily savage did not appear. Perhaps he knew that he would be expected; perhaps the journey of the boys was taking him too far from his accustomed haunts to pursue them farther. The lads did not attempt to decide the question, but remained ever closely on their guard, and kept Ring, their dog, on duty as a special scout on both flanks and front and rear, most of the time, while they worked their way steadily forward.

Ring's scouting, though not so intelligent as that of a human being, of course, was very helpful to his masters; but most of all, it resulted in the making of a discovery which had a most important bearing upon the future and added a great deal indeed to the adventures which were in store for the two friends.

"It was not far from here that Ichabod Nesbit fired at us, killing our horse, last fall," said

John one evening as the boys were making camp.

"We must be somewhere near the spot. Very likely we shall pass it tomorrow," Ree answered.

"It is not over a mile from here," John insisted. "When Nesbit shot at us and ran back, Tom Fish and I followed after him, you remember, never thinking that Black Eagle was chasing him. I recollect noticing at the time that oak tree with the bark torn off by lightning over there. Why, it couldn't have been very far from here that Black Eagle caught Nesbit and killed him."

Ree had climbed into the cart to give the still unconscious stranger a drink of water and to make his bed more comfortable in preparation for the night, and gave no answer. So, thinking little more of the fate of the outlaw of whom he had been speaking, John strolled over to a fallen treetop at the edge of a little hill a dozen rods away, to gather an armful of dry wood for the fire. Ring had gone on ahead of

him and now ran down into the valley where there was a stream of water. Thinking the dog was only wanting a drink, the boy paid no attention to him, and was starting back to camp when Ring came bounding forward, with some strange object in his mouth.

"What have you found now, old fellow?" demanded John, putting his wood down; for Ring was constantly discovering bones and other things in the woods, and carrying them into camp. For answer the dog dropped the strange object at his master's feet.

"By gravy! Where did that come from?" was John's soliloquy, the indifference which had first marked his tones quickly disappearing.

With deep interest he examined a small, oblong, metal box, such as snuff was carried in many years ago, turning it over and over, and trying in vain to open it. The box was greatly discolored and so dingy that John was not sure of the quality of the metal, though he supposed it to be silver.

"Where'd you find it, Ring?" he asked, but the dog only wagged his tail as his head was patted.

"There's a strange thing to find in such a place as this," cried John, tossing the box to Ree, as he reached the camp. "Ring fetched it up out of the valley yonder."

"Well! What's in it?" Ree asked interestedly. "There's no name on it. Open it."

"I don't know who has a better right," was John's reply, and without more ado Ree struck the edge of the box sharply against the heavy wheel of the cart. A piece of paper, yellow and water-stained, fell to the ground as the lid flew open.

"Maybe this will tell whose box it is," said John, picking the paper up, "if it isn't too dark to read it. Why, it's only a piece of some old letter or something," he added, unfolding a long half-sheet of the size commonly known as foolscap. "There's no name at the beginning or the end, that I can see."

"It is a woman's writing," said Ree, looking

over his chum's shoulder. "But I guess it doesn't amount to much. Some poor chap's sweetheart wrote it, maybe, and he must have carried it a long while before he lost it. I wish we knew just where Ring got hold of it; for" —and Kingdom's voice sank to a whisper—"I am afraid, John, it may be another case like that of our friend in the cart here."

"But let's find out what it says," John answered impatiently.

"It is too dark. It won't do to make a target of ourselves by building enough fire to see by, and we will have to let it go till morning."

The wisdom of Ree's remark about too much firelight was very apparent, so John conquered his curiosity by joking his companion about the fear he had expressed that the snuff box might have been found upon the person of some white man cruelly murdered in the woods, as Theodore Hatch had so nearly been.

"I suppose Ring got the box out of the man's inside pocket, then buttoned his coat up again," he laughed.

It was so unusual for Ree to take a gloomy view of any circumstance or discovery, that, realizing there was not much probability, after all, that their dog had secured the box from the body of some unfortunate hunter or explorer, as he had suggested, he was quite bored by John's fun. But he did not show it; that would have been more unlike him still.

It is rather strange that, notwithstanding that they had been talking of Ichabod Nesbit just a minute or two before the strange box was found by their dog, neither of the boys thought of the outlaw in connection with the odd discovery, in all their conversation about the matter during the evening. The box they rubbed and polished and made certain it was silver, but no name or sign of whose property it might have been did they discover, except the torn piece of paper, the writing on which it was too dark to read.

The night passed without incident, and by dividing the long hours of watching over the camp and wounded stranger, both Ree and

John obtained some sleep and rest—enough that with the coming of daylight each felt more spry and fresh than at any time since the discovery of the unconscious form of Theodore Hatch had resulted in the breaking of their slumbers.

John watered the horses at the brook in the valley hard by and harnessed Neb while Ree broiled some venison and toasted some corn bread, brought from Pittsburg, for their breakfast. As they sat on a small log within their camp, eating and talking, the conversation turned at once to the silver snuff box and its written contents.

"And now read the letter, Ree; don't keep a fellow waiting any longer," John demanded.

Kingdom secured the box from a small chest in the cart, where it had been safely deposited over night, and as John ate away, a piece of bread in one hand, a piece of venison in the other, watching with much interest all that his friend did, the latter removed the lid and took out the yellow-stained paper.

"Why, it is not all here! The letter has been torn in two right through the middle!" he exclaimed. "We didn't notice that last night."

"Well, land o' Goshen! Read what you can! I've been waiting all night to find out what the writing is, and now you behave as though we had no interest in the thing!" John cried with an impatient laugh.

"You read it! Look here! Now what can be made out of this?"

Together the young men studied the writing. As Ree had said, the document had been torn squarely in two lengthwise, and that which remained was so faded and so soiled that to read it was difficult. By degrees, however, the wording and letters were made out as follows:

Buried near Philadel
taining upwards of one
and hidden with it is oth
to mention several pieces
not to exceed two
explained to both of *y*

to each, my dear nep
for you when you shal
of this letter together,
the treasure which I
It will never be claim
shall never again re
nor have I in the na
than a few years to live.
never see either of you a
have placed in a cedar
jewels and silver are
you how to find the cask
the Bunch of Grapes inn
west, is a woodland wh
by the many charred st
trees, caused by a fire
forest there some years
great deal of damage
anyone can tell you. But
that now. It is a lonely
you will not need go at
the buried treasure. Grow
stone's throw, or perhaps
from the road are three
together. There are no oth

money and valuables I ha
twelve yards directly
yards directly north of
three trees, which is on
as you approach from the
of mullen has grown up
where the chest is hid
shall find, only as I
my separate letters to each
both share in this property,
such pains to arrange for
and the silver and the jew
be the property of whom
But I have seen to it
too deep for the plowshares
and very like it will nev
by some strange fortune,
yourselves should be the
the two halves of this le

"Well, I wish we had the other part of that letter!" cried John Jerome, his eyes sparkling. "Somebody has been in this part of the country looking for hidden treasure!"

"It appears that that is what the whole thing

is about, but it isn't in this part of the country," said Ree, more quietly. "Don't you see, in the very beginning it says, 'Buried near Philadel'? Why, the rest of that word, which is cut away, with the other half of the letter, would make it Philadelphia, of course."

"My! but I'd like to stumble onto that chest, just the same," was John's reply. "Why, the letter tells of gold and silver and jewels—maybe it is pirates, Ree! For pity's sake, let's read it through again!"

Much less excited than his companion, Ree went over the writing once more, trying with John, but in vain, to supply the missing words at the end of each line. They could make out nothing definite, though the more they studied the more certain they were that some one had written a description of the hiding place of certain money and valuables, and then for some reason cut the paper in two.

The mystery about it all and the fascination which the possibility of finding hidden treasure has for every one, kept the two boys poring

over the writing and talking of it much longer than they thought. Time passed so quickly that half the forenoon was gone ere they could put the subject by and prepare to resume their journey.

His brain cooler and his thoughts more calm than John's, as he continued to think of the mysterious document, a happy idea came to Ree's mind and he wondered that he had not thought of it before. Why not try, with the aid of Ring, to learn just where the silver snuff box had lain? There might be something to afford some clue to the owner of the box close by, or it might be that he had been right in suggesting that some poor fellow lay cold in death not far away.

Without delay Kingdom told John of his idea, and filled with a variety of expectations, hopes and fears, that young man hailed the thought with delight. Ring was called, and the silver box held where he could see and smell it.

"Take it back, you rascal! Take it where

you found it!" commanded Ree, talking that tack with the dog, because he knew Ring would understand better than if he asked him where he had found the box.

John joined in the command, and a look of understanding coming to the dog's eyes, though the poor fellow showed that he thought he was being scolded for having done something wrong, he seized the box in his teeth and trotted away.

With a hasty glance into the cart to see that the wounded man was safe for the time being, both boys set off at a little run to follow Ring. Straight to the hillside and down into the valley the dog went, then for a considerable distance followed the stream therein.

Running around a clump of bushes, the dog disappeared from view. A half minute later, when Ree and John came up with him, he was standing beside a pile of stones half covered by brush. Under this little mound a woodchuck or skunk had burrowed, and there were

evidences that Ring had started to dig out whatever animal was inside.

"You don't suppose the silver box came out of that hole, do you?" John asked of Ree, his tones showing disappointment.

"No, I don't," was the decisive answer, as Kingdom pulled away some dead branches, and lifted up a flat stone, "but I do think that the bones—"

"Of Ichabod Nesbit are under those rocks!" cried John, excitedly finishing the sentence.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CABIN BY THE RIVER.

With anxious haste John began tearing away the brush from over the heap of stones which, he was now certain, covered all that remained of the body of Ichabod Nesbit, the outlaw, whom Black Eagle, the Indian, had killed a year before.

"You remember Black Eagle's telling us that he placed stones on Nesbit's body, don't you?" he asked of Ree, who was working more quietly, but no less industriously than himself. "'Put stones on him and Great Spirit never find him,' he said, you know."

Ree did remember these words of the Indian,

but he was thinking of something else, and said:

"We can hunt here all day, John, and we will find the bones of Nesbit under this pile of stones and brush, I'm sure; but the other half of that letter is not here. I'll tell you where it is, though. I'll bet a coonskin cap the chaps we saw at the Eagle tavern have it."

"I remember! You mean that piece of paper or letter, or whatever it was, that they were so afraid I'd see!"

"And don't you recollect how curious they were to know all we could tell them of Nesbit, and how he was killed, but especially where? As sure as shootin' they have one half of that paper telling where some one buried a fortune, and they must have known that Ichabod Nesbit had the other half! Why, it is as plain as day!"

Five minutes later the boys had completely uncovered the bones of a man. That they were those of their one-time enemy, Ichabod Nesbit, there could be no doubt. John recognized the

remnants of a blue homespun shirt which Nesbit had worn, but Ree clinched the matter by making the discovery that the skull of the skeleton was missing. For they recalled how Black Eagle had journeyed to this western country and carried away the skull to convince another Indian that he had really killed Nesbit.

"It's too bad," said Ree, quite sorrowfully. "Nesbit might have been a prosperous man if he had but used his gifts in the right way. And here he lies!"

"Thunderation! He would have killed us, if Black Eagle hadn't killed him," John broke out, almost indignantly.

"But we ought to give his bones as decent a burial as possible, 'way off here; that is what I was thinking of," Ree made answer. "Yet, we haven't time to do it now. Our friend up there may have taken a delirious spell and fallen out of the cart before we get back, as it is."

Meanwhile the boys were searching the ground about the skeleton carefully. They found nothing, however, and rightly judged

that Black Eagle had taken all of Nesbit's property which was in sight, for which he cared, at the time he killed the man.

The manner in which their dog had chanced to find the snuff box—the one thing which had not been carried away—was plain. It had fallen away from the rotted clothing still clinging to the bones, at which unknown animals had been gnawing, and was brought to light when Ring tried to get at these burrowing creatures in their holes.

Returning the stones and brush to the position in which they had found them, but agreeing to return some day and bury the skeleton properly, Ree and John lost no time in hastening back to their camp. The mystery of the snuff box and the writing in it had been partially solved, and now their thoughts were again chiefly of reaching their long-deserted cabin as speedily as possible.

Within an hour after their discovery of the lonely, last resting place of Ichabod Nesbit's body, they were again making their way far-

ther and deeper into the wilderness, one of whose manifold gloomy and terrible secrets had that morning been revealed to them. They little knew at that time what others were in store.

The young emigrants were now not a great deal more than one day of successful traveling distant from the little log house on the bluff above the Cuyahoga river, which had been, and was again to be, their home.

"We don't want to get there at dark, but should have plenty of time to look about us and get beds fixed up, and all that, when we do reach the shanty," John Jerome told his chum. "We better go just as far as we can to-day, and then maybe we can reach our house by noon to-morrow."

Ree accepted the suggestion as a good one, and, though they did their best for the sick man in the cart, Theodore Hatch, had he been possessed of his senses, would have said he had a pretty rough ride, as Neb was urged to the best possible speed over the hilly, densely

wooded country through which the little party was now traveling.

Within a mile or two after leaving camp on this day the boys passed through the valley where their horse had been shot and killed on their previous trip into the wilderness. There stood the cart they had had, practically as they had left it, but presenting a most forlorn appearance with the rank grass and low bushes growing up all about it. On examination, however, the weather-beaten vehicle was found to be in fairly good condition, and the two friends determined that some time soon they would return for it. Though they were already provided with a strong, heavy cart, it would be very convenient to have another in case of accident, and as the abandoned property was their own, there was no reason why they should not reclaim it.

With the coming of another evening camp was made not more than four miles, the boys judged, from their destination. They exercised the same care as before, and one re-

mained up with the wounded stranger and on guard until morning; but save for the unusually loud howling of a pack of wolves, finding it harder to obtain food now that winter was coming on, there was nothing to disturb the lads throughout the night.

John did guard duty from some time after midnight until dawn, and, taking a little walk not far from camp at daybreak, saw and shot a fine young deer.

"We will not want to move into our house with an empty pantry," he delightedly told Ree, the latter springing up upon hearing the discharge of the rifle.

John's elation over the killing of the deer was quite unusual. It was not that such an occurrence was uncommon or that he had made an extremely good shot; but this was a very important day to him. To Kingdom it was the same—the day to which they had looked forward for many months, and especially during the weeks since they had left Connecticut; and both were genuinely happy. The weather was

cool and bracing. Most of the trees were bare and every stream was covered with floating leaves, save where the current was strong enough to sweep them away. All nature was preparing for winter, and the effect was invigorating. It made the young pioneers anxious to do the same.

Except for the one Redskin who had shown a hostile disposition, no trouble with any Indians had been experienced. There was promise that game would be no less abundant than the previous winter, for the summer had been favorable. There was a prospect, also, of probably two weeks of Indian summer in which to get ready for the colder, stormy weather.

Thus were the hearts of the two friends light, and their hopes buoyant, as they began their last day's journey. Their progress was excellent, though the road was through the unbroken forest. Every few minutes they recognized some spot that they knew, as they drew nearer and nearer to the home they sought, and so did they come at last, when the

sun was still in midsky, to the top of the hill from which, looking across the valley to the high knoll rising beside the river, they could see the cabin they had so hurriedly left six months before.

John was driving. Ree had gone some distance in advance of the cart but was waiting for it to come up; and as though they read each other's thoughts, the two lads went forward together to a point which would afford them a complete view of the little valley whose natural clearing they had enlarged in their first work of home building.

Silently they stood side by side and gazed upon the quiet scene. There was the cabin, seemingly just as they had left it. Between it and them was the little field of corn they had planted. Indians had carried away most, if not all, of the grain, it was plain to be seen; but the stalks remaining showed that there must have been a good yield. To the right was the little plot of ground which they had ploughed, after a fashion, for potatoes. The

grass and some weeds had so grown up there, however, that it was impossible to determine at once whether this crop had grown, and if so, whether the potatoes had been stolen. Squashes and beans had been planted in the same way, and a closer investigation would need to be made to discover what had come of the work of the springtime, so far as these were concerned, also.

All in all the deserted, lonesome look which pervaded the scene made John blue and melancholy. Quick to notice this, and anxious to dispel such a feeling in his friend, Ree cheerily said:

"At any rate, John, there is a lot of grass grown up on our farm, and we will need to cut a lot of it for two horses."

"It makes me almost homesick," the other answered with a sigh.

"Fiddlesticks! We've got too much to do to be homesick! Wait here and keep your eye on the cart while I scout over to the cabin. I'll be back and help you down the hill, but we want

to know that all is serene before we drive into the open."

So saying, Ree trotted down the hill, skirted the edge of the forest a little way, and then, seeing that all was quiet, walked quickly across the clearing and up the steep slope to the rude little house. An involuntary, almost imperceptible shudder passed over him as he noticed at once the deep dents in the heavy door of the cabin, recalled the attack which Big Buffalo had led upon them, and saw a great dark blot upon the threshold, which he knew had been dyed there by blood of that fight.

But putting the gloomy thought from his mind, with a determination such as he well knew how to exercise, he pulled the latch-string still hanging out, and pushed open the door. A damp, musty odor greeted him, and with only a hasty glance inside, and leaving the door open to admit the fresh air, he turned and hurried across the valley and up the hill to where John was waiting.

"Keep your eyes wide open, Ree," Jerome

called out as Kingdom came near, "that sneaking Redskin is not far away!"

As all had been very quiet it was hard to understand what John meant, but the latter pointed to Phœbe, the wounded Quaker's mare, as Ree asked for information, and it was enough. The poor beast was terror-stricken as when before it had scented that lone savage who had so nearly killed its master.

"I haven't seen a thing," Jerome went on, "but I'll wager that the mare is not mistaken."

As though in emphatic confirmation of John's words, a rifle sounded and a bullet sped through the canvas of the covered cart.

In an instant Return Kingdom's weapon was in readiness. A streak of darker hue against the background of the trees mid which he was watching, darted like a shadow between two large oaks. Quick as lightning the boy fired.

A piercing yell followed Ree's shot. John, no slower than his companion to see the flitting form of the Indian, dashing away among the

trees, also fired just as the savage screamed. But there came no answering bullet or sound.

"I rather guess we got him—one of us," said John, exultingly. "I never saw so slippery a heathen, though. He glides along fast as an arrow and with no more noise. Why, his feet hardly touched the ground!"

Having quickly reloaded his rifle, Ree was watching keenly in all directions; but when no sight or sound of the wary savage appeared, he replied to his friend's remark.

"Slippery as an eel; maybe we *have* finished him."

Careful search, however, failed to reveal to the boys any trace of the Indian whose body John had been quite confident they would find stretched upon the leaves not far away. As he had done before, the fellow had disappeared instantly and completely as a puff of thin smoke in a raging gale.

Considerably disturbed, the lads took their cart and horses down the hill and into the open space between the forest and the cabin, with

the greatest caution. They had hoped they were quit of their mysterious foe, and his sudden reappearance, when there had been reason to believe he was far away, was more than annoying.

"At any rate we will have four good, strong walls between ourselves and the murderous scamp to-night," said John Jerome, as they drove up the hill to the cabin. "It is funny that on our other trip we were mysteriously shot at in just this way."

"It is probably the fellow they told us of in Pittsburg," Kingdom answered. "I am glad he hasn't tried to shoot the horses; maybe he will let them alone. We will have to build a lean-to for them, right away."

In a few minutes the journey which had taken so long was over. The cart of the young pioneers was drawn up before the cabin door, and there was so much to be done in the next hour or two that the prowling Redskin might have been more successful in his secret attacks than he had yet been, had he improved

the opportunity. Fortunately he did not, and in a short time a bright fire was driving the chill, damp air from the little log house, and a bed was fixed up in a snug corner and Theodore Hatch was carried to it. The horses were watered and tethered near the door, and a late dinner was prepared by John, while Ree proceeded with the unloading of the cart.

Though still unconscious and so weak that he could scarcely lift his hand, his threshing about and calling out in delirium long since over, no one seemed to feel the change in the situation more than did the wounded stranger. As was his custom, Ree gave him the best attention in his power, before eating his own dinner, and as he did so, could not but notice the change for the better which his patient showed. And he was not greatly surprised by the greater change soon following.

Sitting astride a chest, a pewter plate between them, the young pioneers were eating their noonday meal when a groan came from the stranger's rude couch. Immediately Ree

was at the man's side to make his position more comfortable, and John arose to help, if necessary.

Slowly the Quaker's eyes opened. Slowly there came into them a gleam of intelligence he had not hitherto shown. Ree stooped to adjust the coarse pillow under the injured head.

"I fear I have been ill. What place is this, young friend?"

It was the voice of Theodore Hatch, low and weak, but clear and sane. No sound could have given Return Kingdom or John Jerome greater pleasure than this indication that their work and worry and constant efforts to save the life of this man, a stranger, but a human being and brother white man still, would be rewarded by seeing him recover. But his tones were so pitifully feeble and his loss of strength so complete, that John turned away, tears in his eyes.

"You are still sick, and must lie very quiet," Ree answered the unfortunate man in a gentle

voice. "You are with friends who will do anything they can for you."

It seemed to take a full minute for the man's injured brain to comprehend what was said to him. At last he seemed to remember what had happened. There came a look of great alarm upon his face, and in husky, deeply anxious tones he said, struggling to rise up:

"Hast seen my saddle bags? Where—where are they? Surely—surely—"

"Here they are, all safe and sound," John answered, as Ree gently bore the sufferer down on his bed again; and as he felt his property placed in his hands, the wounded Quaker, holding them with all his remaining strength, allowed his eyes to close. Soon he slept and it required no doctor to tell that the crisis had been passed and Theodore Hatch was on the way to health again.

CHAPTER VII.

THE REWARD OF VIGILANCE.

"Have you ever seen what's inside those saddle bags, Ree?"

John Jerome asked the question when it was certain that Theodore Hatch was sleeping, and the more comfortably because the property to which reference was made was clasped under his arm.

"I took a shirt out of the bags, you know, to make bandages. There was nothing in them that I saw to make him so anxious about them," Kingdom answered. "Of course I didn't see anything in them, nor look for anything except something to tie up his wounds with."

"That man at Fort Pitt thought he had gold in the bags, that he kept them close by him all the time, you remember," John went on. "Now I don't think there is any gold in them, but maybe the other half of that letter about those hidden valuables is there; that's what I've been thinking; for don't you know how at first he would call out for Ichabod Nesbit and ask if he had the letter, and all that? Yes sir, Mr. Hatch will be able to tell all about the paper we found in Nesbit's snuff box, when he comes to enough and gets strong."

"You are wrong, John; see if you aren't. Because if this man has the other part of the letter, and was looking for Nesbit to get the part he had, to put the two together, what was that paper that Duff and Dexter had at the Eagle tavern? Then, too, Duff and Dexter were just such rough fellows as Nesbit and might have been associated with him. But you can't imagine this respectable Quaker and Nesbit having anything to do with one another, can you?"

Still John would not give in to Ree's way of thinking, and as the argument was delaying their work when there was much to be done, the talk was discontinued.

The short afternoon came to a close before the boys were fully prepared for evening. Their goods were all unpacked and carried into the cabin, where they lay in confusion. A great pile of dry wood had been carried in, and fresh, dry leaves gathered for beds, but no provision had been made for shelter or protection for the horses, and there were numerous spots in which the cabin walls needed re-chinking to keep out the wind; the hot summer sun having baked the mud so dry that in places it had fallen away from between the logs.

Without a word, when their supper was over, Kingdom, taking a large blanket, hung it before the fire in such a way that the cabin was made quite entirely dark.

"What's that for?" demanded John.

"You'll see. Now I'm going out, and you close the door after me. With the blanket be-

fore the fire, any one who might be watching will need to look pretty close to see the door opened and closed. And I'm going to stay outside all night, keeping in the shadow where I won't be seen, and watch the horses and at the same time watch for that slippery Redskin. If I can capture him, I'm going to do it."

John started to answer, protesting that Ree must not take the whole night of guard duty upon himself; but his chum interrupted him:

"We must appear to have gone to bed and be sound asleep, so let the fire die down early. One of us must be inside to watch Mr. Hatch, anyway, and you must do that. When my eyes get used to the darkness I can see all around the clearing, and all I'll want of you is that you be ready if I call you. If we are going to be spied upon, we want to know it from the start."

Saying no more, Kingdom slipped out of the darkened cabin and to the darkest side of the building.

Quickly John closed the door, and drew the blanket from in front of the fireplace. He saw

the wisdom of Ree's plan clearly, and was ready to do his part. Hard as it was to remain awake when he had planned on a good, sound sleep, as they were carrying in leaves to make soft beds, he resolved not to close his eyes. He fixed a snug place in the chimney corner for the dog, Ring, and then, as the stranger was resting comfortably, to all appearances, he found a seat on a deerskin on the floor, and with his back against another, spread over a chest, settled himself to wait and listen.

As the wind moaned dismally about the cabin and the swish and tinkle of the water of the river below came to his ears, he thought of Ree outside in the cold, and remembered how ever ready his chum was to take upon himself their greatest burdens. Then he recalled the necessity of their being ever keenly watchful, and admiring Ree the more, as he thought of their danger, told himself again that he must not shut his eyes. Almost at the same moment his chin dropped upon his chest, and, completely worn out, he succumbed to the pleasant

warmth, to which he had not lately been accustomed, and fell sound asleep.

By no means afraid, for he was almost fearless, but considerably worried by the antics of the Indian, who seemed able to appear and disappear in a most startling and mysterious manner, whenever he chose to do so, Kingdom stationed himself in the shadows close to the cabin wall, and vigilantly watched in all directions. He was protected from the wind, but the night air was cold and raw, and for want of exercise he became quite chilled.

From all sides came at intervals the discordant howls and screams of the beasts of the forest. The melancholy dirges of the wind among the trees added to the general gloom. Still Kingdom courageously remained at his post, though as the hours dragged by, and even the horses, grazing a few yards from the cabin door, were undisturbed, he felt that his labor was lost.

Remembering, however, that the whole object of his having undertaken this plan of

vigilance was to find out whether Indians or other foes were spying upon himself and John, and knowing that unless he watched all night he would not know positively whether prowlers had been about, the lad straightened himself up and with renewed determination put behind him a great temptation to go in and lie down, and turn Ring out to keep guard until morning. Still he saw no sign of any known or unknown enemy and his interest in his self-imposed task was beginning to wane again, when a sound of footfalls in the leaves at the edge of the forest, to the left of the cabin, came to him.

Grasping his rifle closer, Ree strained both ears and eyes to detect the coming of—he was sure it could be no one else than the Indian who had been following upon their trail. In another second there came out of the woods two figures, carrying a canoe between them.

Ree could not at once make out whether they were Indians or white men in rough frontier dress. Their burden seemed heavy, and as they came nearer, heading toward a low place

in the bank beside the river, he observed that the canoe was well filled, which accounted for its seeming to weigh a great deal. At the same time he discovered that the two men were Indians. What were they doing? Why were they traveling by night, in this manner?

Unseen by the Redskins, Ree watched them narrowly. They had approached to within one hundred yards of him to reach the river just at the foot of the steep slope leading down from the cabin, and so avoid going around a growth of bushes upon the bank, to get to the water.

Even in the dim moonlight the white boy saw them clearly. Suddenly as a lightning flash, he realized what the savages were doing. He recognized the canoe they carried. It was his own and John's—the one which, with other property that they had been unable to take with them, they had hidden in a great hollow log a quarter of a mile away, when leaving the cabin to hurry to Connecticut.

It was more than probable that these two In-

dians had found the canoe some time before and had planned to steal it. Their discovery that the two boys had returned and would soon regain possession of the craft and their other belongings prompted the Redskins to make haste to carry the canoe and goods away before this should happen.

Sure that he was correct in thus reasoning, but desirous of making no hard feelings with the Indians over the matter, Ree adopted a novel plan. As the savages set their burden down preparatory to the launching of the canoe, the boy walked quickly toward them.

"How do, friends," he called. "It's real kind of you to bring us our canoe so soon."

Never were two savages so completely taken by surprise, or more at a loss to know what to do or say. There was such kindness in Kingdom's tones that they were not sure whether his remark was meant to be sarcastic or not.

One of the Indians made a leap as though he would run away. The other, with the savage "Ugh!" uttered in a tone so ridiculously crest-

fallen that Kingdom could hardly suppress a laugh, stood still.

Walking quickly up to the Redskin, Kingdom gave him a hearty handshake, seeing which the other Indian approached, somewhat after the manner of a small boy who fears punishment, and also shook hands.

Ree would have liked to talk with the Indians and learn the general situation as to the progress of hostilities in the northwest and the state of affairs along the frontier, but they were too chagrined to remain. The two agreed, however, to return at some future time for presents Kingdom promised them in return for their having carried the canoe and its heavy load to the cabin.

He recognized them, just before they were leaving, as Beaver Hair and Long Arrow, Mingoes who had called at the cabin once or twice the previous winter, and was anxious to make friends of them. This he undoubtedly succeeded in doing, for the savages knew that had he been disposed to open fire upon them he

could probably have killed them both; and in their eyes he would have been justified in doing so, having caught them in the act of stealing.

Long afterward it developed that Beaver Hair and Long Arrow were, as was true of most Indians, honest; but they had obtained fire water of a trader near where the Cuyahoga empties into Lake Erie, and were not in their right senses when, as they were paddling up the river, they discovered that the boy traders had just returned to the cabin, and they, having long ago discovered where the canoe was hidden, concealed themselves to await a favorable time for carrying the property off.

That they were caught in the act they attributed to two things, the anger of the Great Spirit and the keen scent of Kingdom, whom from that night they called "White Fox"; for they believed that it was some powerful sense of smell possessed by Ree which had awakened him and resulted in their being discovered.

Kingdom watched the two Indians as they disappeared down the river, and as he walked

up the slope to the cabin, looking carefully for any other visitors, he saw the gray light of another day upon the eastern horizon. Still he loitered in the darker shadows, but when it was well-nigh daylight, and all continued quiet, he quietly entered the cabin, thinking to get some rest.

Fast asleep, just as he had settled himself down to wait and watch, his back against a skin-covered chest, Ree found John, and smiled as he immediately guessed that his chum had set out to remain awake all night, and resolved to have some fun. Thin ice had formed on a shallow puddle of water at the foot of the hill, and securing a small piece Ree placed it on John's bare head. For a few seconds the sleeper did not stir, but just as the cold was penetrating to the scalp and John moved uneasily, Ree spoke in deep, unnatural tones:

"Injun get scalp heap quick! Heap nice scalp!"

With a yell, John leaped to his feet, his

hands flying to his head only to encounter his wet hair.

Ree had leaped into a corner where he was not immediately seen, while John, his senses not yet collected, but bewildered and really alarmed, seized his rifle and sprang to a loop hole. In another moment, however, he heard his friend's laughter. Then he guessed what had happened; but he did not look around. Still staring out of the loop hole, he said in the most ordinary tone:

"Looks as though it would be a nice day, Ree."

"It was quite a chilly night," Kingdom answered in the same manner, stirring the coals of the fire, and getting down on his knees to blow them.

And not once that day was the joke referred to. Afterward John said that the first impression he had as he felt the ice on his head was that his hair was on fire.

John was much surprised but equally pleased as he learned of Ree's adventure of the night,

and could not wait until after breakfast to run down to the foot of the slope to inspect the canoe. He found that it was only a little warped by reason of having been out of the water all summer, and the kettle and other articles they had left with it, were also in good condition.

Awakened from his long sleep at last, but still keeping his precious saddle bags under one arm, Theodore Hatch was telling Ree that he felt much improved, as John returned to the cabin.

Indeed, the mysterious stranger was looking vastly better than at any time yet, and when breakfast was ready, ate quite heartily, propped up on the rude bed he occupied. He inquired about his mare, Phœbe, before he asked anything else, and that led to the telling of the whole story of how he had been found and cared for by the boys. With much feeling the Quaker expressed his gratitude.

"I was traveling into the wilderness unarmed," he said. "I am a man of peace, as

are all those of our faith. I have met hostile Indians at different times, but when they saw who and what I was, they made no movement toward molesting me. I cannot understand why I was attacked, but it must have been because of the failing light, and my assailant, whoever he was, may not have seen rightly. It was just at evening as I prepared to spend the night beside a little thicket. I saw no one, but heard a shot and fell with the wound in my side. I was still conscious as a young Indian ran up to me and beat me on the head with his hatchet. Then I knew no more."

As he spoke, Theodore Hatch put up his hand to feel his injured head. A look of horror and mental anguish came to his face.

"Was I scalped?" he gasped.

John was almost ready to laugh over the Quaker's despairing tone, but kept a straight face, and Ree in answer to the question soberly nodded.

"The poor, deluded sinner," groaned the stranger. "I have forgiven mine enemies al-

ways—always. I must—I will—aye, I do, truly forgive him. He did not know I was a man of peace. Oh, why did I come into these forests?"

"Well, why did you, sir?" asked John Jerome, quite respectfully, but brimming over with curiosity, as he remembered the Quaker's embarrassment when the name of Ichabod Nesbit had been mentioned at Pittsburg. He turned around on his three-legged stool and looked the older man squarely in the face as he asked the question, but Ree to hide his embarrassment rose and looked out of a loop hole.

The stranger made no answer, but giving Jerome a startled, searching look, seemed to hug the saddle bags under his arm the closer.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FATE OF BLACK EAGLE.

"I think Mr. Hatch better not talk any more now," said Return Kingdom, quickly looking around and noticing the Quaker's flushed, excited manner. "You must be careful, you are still so weak," the boy continued, adjusting the straw-filled bolster for the man to lie down again.

"I didn't mean any harm by my question," John spoke up, quietly.

"Thou didst no harm, young friend, but almost frightened me," the stranger answered.

So the incident passed leaving the boys more curious than ever to know the history and true identity of Theodore Hatch. Ree would not

confess that he was especially anxious to learn these things, because his fear of wounding the man's feelings would not permit him to question the stranger; but John openly vowed that he meant to find out just who and what the stranger was, and would do so sooner or later. And in time the boys did ascertain all they could have wished to know, but in ways quite unexpected.

"There's a lot of work to be done, building a horse shed and all," said Ree, when the two friends were outside the cabin after the talk with Theodore Hatch, "but in spite of that, one of us should go back along the trail and bury the bones of Ichabod Nesbit. I'm afraid that some day our Quaker will ask to be taken to the place, and he would not think very well of us if he found things just as they were left."

John fell in with this suggestion heartily, but it was agreed that there would be time to perform the task spoken of, two or three days later, and meanwhile some inkling of the whereabouts of the lone Indian might be obtained.

Thus it was that after some discussion it was decided that Ree should go that very day to the village of the Delawares on the lake a few miles away, to learn all he could of this particular savage and the disposition of the Indians in general, while at the same time he showed the people of Captain Pipe, the Delaware chieftain, that the lads desired to renew their friendly relations with them. John would remain with the stranger to care for him and guard the cabin, giving his work the while to cutting small logs with which to build a barn.

Taking some presents for the Delawares, Ree set out at about nine o'clock, promising to be home by dark. John shouldered his axe and went to work. It had been Ree's first plan to make his trip on horseback, but resolving that it would be safer to slip through the woods very quietly until he found out just what the situation with reference to the Indians was, he traveled on foot, and soon found himself upon the familiar portage trail leading from the Cuya-

hoga river to the headwaters of the Tuscarawas.

Ree knew the way perfectly, for he had traveled the route several times the previous winter. He felt no harm for his safety, but kept his eyes wide open and pushed forward among the great oaks and beech trees stealthily and rapidly. He saw no Indians but once or twice when splendid shots of game might have been made, he ignored them for safety's sake. Leaving the beaten trail after an hour's traveling, he made directly through the woods to the lake. Without seeing any human creature he approached the Indian town.

An air of loneliness hung over the place. Instead of smoke rising from two score or more of fires, in and among the rude log and bark houses and wigwams, the few columns of blue vapor which ascended seemed to show that the village was almost deserted.

This was true. No one remained in the usually lively home of Captain Pipe save a number of children and old men and squaws.

"How—ugh!" grunted an old warrior, smoking his pipe in a sunny place. He recognized Ree at once and held out his hand.

In a few minutes a half dozen aged men of the tribe had gathered around and all gave the young trader welcome. They could speak little English and though Ree knew some Delaware words their efforts at conversation were so poorly rewarded that one of the Indians went to call an interpreter.

To Ree's surprise and pleasure the person summoned was Gentle Maiden, the daughter of Captain Pipe, a young woman thoroughly deserving of the pretty name the Moravian missionaries had bestowed upon her. From them she had learned the language of the "Long-knives" and with her Kingdom could communicate readily.

Gentle Maiden had no hesitancy in answering questions. She said her father and his warriors were still in the northwest country and might be absent all winter. Even lately runners had been in the neighborhood to call

all able-bodied men to join the braves who had first gone forth for the expected fighting, and no Indians remained in the vicinity save those who were too old to go to war, and some of the women and children.

"And Big Buffalo?" asked Ree, referring to the Redskin who had given himself and John so much trouble and from whom he had made his escape in the nick of time after the attack upon their cabin.

"Big Buffalo is with the rest," said Gentle Maiden.

"There is an Indian—not a Delaware, I think—but one who roams the forests alone and is not a friend of the Palefaces. What of him? He is still about here?"

"He is not of my father's people," was the Indian girl's answer.

"You know who he is?"

"There are many wanderers in the forests; many of our race have been driven, even like yonder leaves in the wind, before the coming of the Long-knives."

The answer puzzled Kingdom. It was apparent that the Indian girl wished not to tell what she knew of the mysterious Redskin, and that her sympathy was with him, though she declared herself still friendly to the young traders who had bought land of her father a year earlier.

With genuine Indian hospitality the Indians brought food for Ree, but he noticed that it was of inferior quality and not so generous in quantity as usual—only a handful of parched corn. He ate, however, to show his friendliness, and after a time, leaving his gifts, a string of glass beads and a large pocket knife, with the Delawares, bade them good-bye.

Reaching home some time before sundown, Ree found that John had passed a quiet, busy day. Under these favorable circumstances, as he was almost completely exhausted by his long hours of watchfulness the night before, this following, too, upon many nights of broken rest, he said that Ring might do guard and both himself and John would turn in early. To this

the latter would not listen, however, saying he would remain awake to keep an eye on the horses lest some wild beast attack them, if nothing more. He could remain in the cabin and do this, peering frequently through a loop hole, he said.

This, their second night in the cabin, passed quietly. Once toward morning Phœbe, the Quaker's mare, snorted and trembled violently, but John saw or heard no cause for alarm, though the horse's action undoubtedly indicated that the lone Indian was somewhere near.

Agreeing that this was almost certainly the case, the boys were especially watchful as they were about their work next day and for many days afterward. No night passed, either, until their lean-to stable was completed, but that one of the young men stood guard, much to the alarm of Theodore Hatch, who feared an attack upon the cabin at any time.

This thought did not worry either Ree or John. The tactics of their solitary foe, they were now certain, were not to fight in the open,

but to shoot from some safe distance; and he had shown such fear for his own safety by always disappearing immediately after he had fired a shot, that both lads held him more or less in contempt. Still, they realized the constant danger the Redskin placed them in, and though they had not made an open agreement to that effect, each boy knew that he wanted only the proper opportunity to shoot the Indian dead.

How differently they felt afterward, at least for a time, had no bearing on their plans at this time. They only knew that it was a case of kill or be killed.

The days passed rapidly. There was so much to do that it seemed that deep snows might make hunting a difficult task rather than a pleasure, before they could get to it. No sooner was the barn built than the corn, or all that remained of it, had to be gathered and stored away—the fodder stacked against the stable, the ears hung over the rafters of the cabin,—and the few scattered potatoes which

remained, harvested. Of the latter there was scarcely more than enough for seed for the following spring, and to supplement their store of food in addition to the meat they might always have, nuts were gathered—beech nuts, chestnuts, hickory nuts and butternuts.

When all this had been done there was grass to be stored away for the horses. It scarcely deserved the name of hay—the long grass which grew in open spots along the valley; but quite a large stack of it was laboriously harvested with no tools other than a scythe and home-made rake.

Thus more than two weeks passed, and Theodore Hatch, as much a mystery as ever, was becoming strong enough to dress himself and walk about for a few minutes at a time, when Ree again reminded John of the necessity of their giving the bones of Ichabod Nesbit a decent interment. The result was that John proposed to go himself, on horseback, the following day, and perform the task referred to.

So it was agreed, and allowing the Quaker to

rest under the impression that he was going back along their trail only to bring up the old cart, which for more than a year had stood exposed to the weather in the ravine where it had been left, John started off at daylight on a clear, frosty morning. The fine air and the beautiful, peaceful quiet of the woods, broken only by the occasional call of wild turkeys or the chattering of squirrels and other small animals, put the younger of the boy pioneers in a most happy frame of mind.

Neb, having done little work for more than a fortnight, was also in high spirits and needed no urging to trot or gallop wherever the forest was sufficiently open to permit it. Good progress being made, therefore, horse and rider reached and crossed the gully where the abandoned cart stood, by the middle of the forenoon. Proceeding more slowly then, for the trail was becoming more difficult for traveling, they approached the spot they sought.

"I don't mind the ride at all, but I shan't enjoy playing sexton, I know," John was saying

to himself, as he dismounted to lead Neb down the hill sloping to the brook beside which Ichabod Nesbit's bones lay, and casting about for a suitable place to tie the horse.

"Hark!"

John spoke beneath his breath, and his heart beat fast. Angry voices came to his ear, and they were not far away.

Slipping the bridle rein over a branch, the lad went cautiously forward, keeping behind the thicket which skirted the stream.

Again the voices were heard. Undoubtedly they were those of white men engaged in violent argument.

"'Twas the Quaker, blast him!" one coarse voice exclaimed. "And you, you Indian dog, said not a word about him till now! Why didn't you tell us you had told him where you killed the man?"

Scarcely was this sentence spoken when John reached a point not more than fifty feet from the source of the angry contention where he

could see, but, hidden by the thick brush, escaped being seen.

There stood Duff and Dexter, the men he and Ree had met at the Eagle tavern, and also Hank Quilling, the proprietor of that disreputable establishment. With them was an Indian, —and—could it be possible that he was associating with such rogues?—John almost whistled for amazement. The Redskin was his old friend, Black Eagle.

Duff was speaking. His rage was terrible as he pointed his finger menacingly at the Indian and cried out, as the Mohawk stood haughtily erect, his arms folded upon his chest, though his eyes flashed.

"Blast your red hide! I could—by the Eternal, I *will*—kill you!"

With a tremendous oath, the white man raised his rifle and quick as flash discharged it, the muzzle almost touching Black Eagle's body.

It was all over in an instant. The bullet sped

to the Indian's heart; the poor fellow fell senseless, dying at his slayer's feet.

"Lord, man! Would you bring a whole tribe of warriors down on us? An' us away off here—"

It was the proprietor of the Eagle tavern who was speaking now, gasping the words chokingly, frightened and dazed by the brutal murder committed.

Before he could say more, John Jerome sprang among them. So quickly and noiselessly had he emerged from the brush that he was not seen till his angry voice came shrill and harsh:

"You fiends! You fiends! Oh, I hope I'll see you hanged for this! What does it mean? Shooting Black Eagle down like a wolf—or—or a beast! And he was more a decent man than all three of you!"

With a curse upon the boy, Duff sprang forward and bore him down. Together they fell heavily, the murderer foaming at the mouth like a mad dog, in the violence of his rage, his

evil, disfigured face almost black and horrible to behold, while his companions stood aghast.

"Don't get us into no trouble, Duff! You don't know what yer doin' when yer blood's up!" Dexter protested, hurrying to the combatants and trying to draw his villainous companion away, the man and boy rolling over and over in their fierce struggle.

"Make short work of it, Duff, whatever you do! There's another o' them boys, an' he may be here any minute—an' Injuns, too!" yelled Quilling, the landlord, jumping about in his fear and excitement, and ending with—"Fight it out, dang ye! Ye've had a noose round yer neck 'fore now, but nobody kin say I killed the boy!"

And with these words the fellow threw his rifle over his shoulder and ran.

"Won't do no good to kill him—won't do no good, Duff," Dexter kept gasping, still trying to pull his friend away, though his efforts were puny as a child's.

"Curse you—curse you for two cowardly

fools!" Duff yelled, again and again, vainly trying to get his hands on John Jerome's throat. And then he looked to see whither Quilling had retreated.

The boy, struggling beneath the man's greater weight, needed no better opportunity. He managed to get one foot quickly free and letting it drive with all his force against his assailant's middle, sent the fellow rolling upon the ground.

The next second John was upon his feet, his rifle at his shoulder. Dexter was already running to overtake the fleeing landlord, and Duff, picking himself up, looked first at John, then at his runaway friends.

"Boy," he said, slowly and distinctly, in tones more of deep, deliberate hate than anger, "I was minded to kill you the night you spied on us at that dirty hole of Quilling's. There are reasons why I am going to let you go again"—

"Yes, here's one!" snapped the boy, defiantly raising his rifle.

"You impudent —— but I'm not through with you yet." Duff's voice was low, though deeply, bitterly threatening. But he was interrupted—

"Now you march!" commanded John Jerome, and his voice was stern and sharp. "I'll let daylight into that black heart of yours, right here, and now, if you don't!"

Boldly, not once turning his head to see if the rifle's muzzle still covered him, Duff strode away; but he called to his companions:

"Run, you blasted idiots! but I miss my guess if I don't know who's got something you'd like blasted well to get hold of!"

As the rough fellow disappeared among the trees, John still watching, an Indian, who, unobserved, had seen the killing of Black Eagle, stole away through the bushes and vanished as silently as he had come and as he had watched.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CAMP IN THE TREE-TOP.

Until Duff was out of view John held his rifle ready for immediate use. As he turned from watching the retreating figure of the wretch, his gaze fell upon the outstretched form of the dead Indian—the staring, lustreless eyes and powder-burned, blood-stained body presenting a horrid sight. Near by the brush and stones were thrown aside and the bones of Ichabod Nesbit were scattered all about.

"I see it all now," came slowly and solemnly from the boy's lips. "It is plain as anything ever was! It was the letter they wanted; and to think that those miserable cut-

throats made poor Black Eagle come all this distance to show them where Ichabod Nesbit lay, only to shoot him down in such a manner, when they didn't find it! What was it that Duff was saying, too? Ree will want to know every word: 'It was the Quaker, blast him!' that is what he said. 'And you, you Indian dog, said nothing about him.' Well! I wonder if Theodore Hatch wasn't on his way here to find that letter, himself, and if Black Eagle didn't direct him where to come. Poor Black Eagle! Ichabod Nesbit was the cause of your death at last."

So communing with himself in thoughts and frequent murmured words, John spent a half hour so deeply buried in his reflections concerning the murder of the unfortunate Indian, the likelihood that the murderer might be brought to the rope's end as he so richly deserved, and the mystery of the letter describing the buried treasure, that he did not realize how swiftly time was passing.

A loud whinny from Neb brought the pon-

dering lad to the remembrance that he had much to do, and that already it was noon. Hurrying up the hill he obtained the shovel, fastened to Neb's harness as a means of carrying it conveniently, and led the horse nearer the scene of his labors.

His first task would be to dig a grave; but a new problem appeared. Undoubtedly he must bury the body of Black Eagle as well as the bones of Nesbit. It seemed too dreadful to place them together—the remains of this white man who had killed the Indian's son, and those of the Indian who had been revenged for the act, only to meet his own death after showing Palefaces, whom he believed to be friends, where the outlaw's body lay.

"Yes, there will have to be two graves," John decided, and a glance at the sun told him he must work hard if he was to return to the cabin before another day.

Fortunately the earth was not frozen beneath its thick covering of leaves, and except for the many roots he encountered, the lonely young

sexton of the wilderness made rapid progress. One trench of sufficient length and depth for the purpose, at the foot of a large ash tree, which could be made to serve as a headstone, he had completed when a rustling of the leaves caused him to look quickly up. Duff, Dexter and Quilling stood before him, the last named grinning wolfishly over John's surprise.

"Who killed the Indian known as Black Eagle?" asked Duff, in cold accusing tone, pointing his finger at the boy, who had hastily thrown down his shovel and picked up his rifle, instead.

"That's him," chorused Dexter and Quilling, pointing their fingers also at John.

"Who saw him do it?"

"All three of us," came the answer.

"You swear that this is true?"

"That's what we do; we saw him shoot the Indian," came the reply.

"Now, boy," Duff began, calmly sitting down on a log, his rifle in both hands, while his eyes never left the face of the lad he so

monstrously accused, "you heard what was said. They've hanged men for killing peaceable Redskins before now, and will do it again. Just let us tell what we know at Fort Pitt, and you are pretty likely to stretch a rope. You killed Black Eagle; we saw you do it—never mind, now! Let me talk! I say we saw you shoot the Indian down. We can set all the Mingoes west of the Ohio against you, or we can have you hanged. We haven't just decided which we'd rather do."

"Why, you—you black liar, what are you talking about?" cried John, succeeding at last in getting a word in, as Duff paused. "Do you suppose—"

"Never you mind what I suppose; but we can make you a heap of trouble, because, you know, we saw you kill the Indian—shoot him down in cold blood."

And here a villainous smile flitted over the marked and loathsome face of the wretch; but he scarcely paused, and there was no suspicion

of a smile in the cold harshness of his voice as he went on:

"We can make you and the pompous young gentleman you call Kingdom sweat blood, or hang your scalps on the belts of the Mingoes, without the least trouble to ourselves. But we don't propose to do that. We have nothing against you young shavers, and don't want to have. All we want is the paper writing you got from the body of Ichabod Nesbit. Oh yes, we know you got it. What were you coming here to bury the bones for, if you didn't?"

As one who thinks he has asked a question which cannot be answered, Duff, squinting in a most horrid manner and shaking his finger viciously, paused for a reply.

John was thinking fast. He knew that the murderous trio who faced him would not hesitate to kill if they thought he had the missing half of the hidden fortune letter in his possession. He also knew from the words he had heard Duff use in speaking of Black Eagle, that he had at first believed the letter had fallen into

the Quaker's hands. Did he know where that gentleman then was? It was hardly likely.

In infinitely less time than the telling of it requires, the alert young pioneer thought of these things and without even seeming to hesitate, he answered:

"You'll have to tell me what you are trying to get at; and for the matter of that, what are you doing here? What reason had you for killing Black Eagle the way you did, and he without even a hatchet to defend himself? You can't put that wicked, cold-blooded murder onto me by lying, any more than you can fly. What's more, you can't scare me by saying you'll swear I killed the Indian! So I tell you right here, Mr. Duff, that I want no more to do with you. You guessed right in thinking I came here to bury all that's left of Ichabod Nesbit. It is because my partner and I have civilized feelings. Anything else you want to know you can ask about at the next house. What was Ichabod Nesbit to you, anyway? If you ever had any

friendship for him, why shouldn't you turn in here and help with his grave?"

With such rapidity did John speak, his voice growing in vehemence as he continued, that Duff was bothered to find an immediate answer.

"Didn't you see no Quaker feller 'round here, an' ain't he got no letter like Duff said?" squeaked Dexter, over Duff's shoulder, in his peculiar gasping tones.

"Shut up, you!" commanded Duff, turning to his companion savagely. "Who said anything about a Quaker?" And then to John in the same tones: "Now we have no time for foolishness, bub! We want information and, by heaven, we propose to have it!"

As he spoke the hideous fellow leaped toward the boy as though to seize him.

"Stand back there!" the lad cried, clubbing his rifle, unwilling to shoot, much as he was inclined to do so, unless it were absolutely necessary.

"Grab him! Grab him, you blasted fools!" yelled Duff furiously, and Dexter and Quilling,

who ran to their leader's side, attempted to do so.

Dodging the fellows, John dealt a stunning blow on Duff's head with the butt of his rifle, then, springing to one side, escaped the terrific lunge the brute made toward him, and in another second he had leaped upon Neb's back, Dexter and Quilling being not five yards away. He seized the reins from the branch over which they were thrown, and a word was enough to set the horse off at a gallop.

A bullet whistled over John's shoulder as he bent down to avoid the low limbs of the trees, and the terrible tones of Duff, as in the vilest language he cursed his companions for being too slow, rang in his ears.

One other shot was fired but it went wide. For five minutes he gave Neb free rein, then knowing that he was, for the time being, safe, he stopped, nervous and excited, and doubting if his conduct had been either brave or wise.

"But it was three against one and those fellows would have tried to make me tell all I

know about that letter, and Duff's temper is so awful! He would have killed me, like as not, if I would not tell him anything," John reasoned, persuading himself that he had done well to escape.

What was next to be done? That was the all-important question, after all. Its answer, John decided, depended entirely on what Duff and his agreeable companions meant to do, and he resolved to ascertain their intentions.

Without further loss of time, therefore, the boy fastened Neb's reins to a branch as he had done before, and with great caution hurried back along the trail. If he were being followed, he could soon find it out. If the murderers were gone, he might return and complete the task he had set out to perform.

Expecting to see Duff and the others coming toward him at any moment, John made haste slowly, and half an hour passed before he again came within sight of the little valley where the day's terrible tragedy had been enacted. The three men were not there.

Where were they? To answer the question, the young man who asked it of himself continued on, going in the direction in which Quilling and Dexter had disappeared just after the murder of Black Eagle.

"They may have a camp near by," John told himself as he hurried along, quietly as possible, though the leaves under his feet seemed to rustle loudly as though calling out that he was coming, adding to his fears.

But he was right. Not much more than a quarter of a mile away was a great tree, uprooted by the wind; and partially concealed by the branches of its top upon the ground, he discovered Duff, Dexter and Quilling. They were for the most part hidden by the limbs of the fallen oak and had not John been very watchful he would not have discovered them without being seen himself. As it was, he doubted his ability to approach nearer without revealing his presence to the fellows. That they were talking he knew by their gestures, but not a word could he hear.

Prudence prompted the boy to turn back and hurry home to tell Ree everything that had happened. Then he thought how anxious his chum would be to know what Duff's plans were; and so, yielding to his own curiosity and a desire to obtain this information, he made a wide half-circle and approached the fallen tree, shielded from view by the mass of earth still clinging to its upturned roots. These very roots, however, which served him so well for the one purpose, entirely prevented his hearing what was being said by the men, though he was now quite near. With great care, then, he crept around to the trunk of the tree and keeping close beside it, on his hands and knees crawled forward. Now he could hear the conversation of the fellows, and under the protection of a great limb which projected from the trunk fifty feet from the tree's base, he paused.

"It don't noway stand to reason that the Quaker ain't got the letter."

John knew that it was Dexter who was talk-

ing, though he could not see. The wheezy voice could be no other's.

"But where is he? That's the point I'm getting at. We could fix him in short order, if we only knew that."

These words, sharply spoken, were surely Duff's.

"All I've got to say is, that I wish I was to home—I do, by gum!"

This was the landlord, tired, probably, of sleeping out at night, and working and walking by day. John knew his voice, also.

"I wish to goodness you were!" came the voice of Duff, disgustedly, "but all the miserable, sneaking robbing of travelers' clothes at night, that you ever did wouldn't be a drop in the bucket beside this buried fortune if we can only get hold of it. No man knows better than me what a lot of wealth that chest has in it—unless it be that Quaker, blast him!"

"Well, we might go back to Fort Pitt for a spell, anyhow, an' rest up," suggested Quilling.

"Not by a jugful!" Duff answered. "We'll follow those blasted youngsters up, and find out what they know. Like as not they, and not the Quaker, have got that letter. They're a blamed sight sharper than you give 'em credit for, and the next time you let one of 'em get away from you, I'll boot you seven ways for Sunday, see if I don't!"

Duff's tones were full of emphasis, and it was all very interesting to the boy concealed behind the tree trunk and the giant limb. But he heard no more; for with, "So, now, stir yourselves," the chief of the conspirators walked out from the tree-top. He went toward a small beech in which John now noticed that the quarters of a deer had been hung, beyond the reach of wolves.

The fellow's course took him within a few yards of the hidden boy, but he passed on, unconscious of the eyes which watched him.

Knowing that in returning to the camp with the deer Duff would be almost certain to see him, John waited only till the man's back was toward him, then leaped to his feet and ran.

CHAPTER X.

THE QUAKER'S STORY.

Now it happened that Hank Quilling, the tavern keeper, was gazing straight toward the spot where John was concealed at the moment the boy sprang up, as if out of the earth. The surprise that the fellow suffered as he saw the lad so upset him that he could do nothing but yell, and yell lustily he did:

"There he goes, Duff! There he goes! Stop him, Duff, stop him!"

Duff, likewise taken by surprise, and being under the impression at first, as he heard the leaves rustle under the flying boy's feet, and saw a shadow streaking among the trees, that an Indian was after him, was given such a

scare to begin with, and was so chagrined directly afterward, when he discovered what had taken place, that his wrath rose in a mighty storm.

Quilling's yelling at him, instead of pursuing or shooting at the boy himself directed Duff's rage toward the former landlord. Paying no attention to John, he rushed madly up to Quilling. With the most frightful curses he called the old fellow "a driveling idiot" and worse names, and ended by slapping him full in the face.

Even this vile insult, however, served only to make the erstwhile tavern keeper beg the more piteously for mercy, and try the harder to excuse himself to the man he feared. Never was there a more abject coward.

Considerably astonished that he was not pursued, though he heard the epithets Duff rained upon Quilling, John soon slackened his pace to a brisk walk, and looked about to get his bearings. He had lost sight of the trail when approaching the fallen tree, and in his haste to

flee from the spot when discovery was no longer to be escaped, he had run in the wrong direction. The position of the sun, however, and the mossy bark on the north side of the trees, aided him in soon finding the right course, and in due time he reached Neb. Then he remembered that his shovel had been left in the grave intended for Ichabod Nesbit, and rode back for it.

The short afternoon was nearly gone, and it was likely that at any moment Duff and his two choice friends would come upon the scene. Still John resolved to try to complete the work of burying Nesbit's remains. He stooped and picked up the shovel.

Bang—splank! A bullet shattered the handle of the tool and knocked it from the lad's hands. At the same instant he saw Duff and Dexter running toward him, Quilling bringing up the rear.

In a trice John was mounted and away amid the frantic yells of Quilling and the harsh

curses of Duff, and though Dexter took aim at him, he did not fire.

"It's the charm—it's the charm!" cried Quilling tremblingly. "Three times that pesky young rooster has got away from us this day! It's bad luck—bad luck to follow him now!"

John heard the cry as he sped up the hill, but he knew Duff would ignore it, and feeling sure that he would be followed clear to the cabin, sooner or later, he lost no more time in hurrying toward home. He did not even stop in the gully to hitch Neb to the abandoned cart, as he had planned, but hurried by. It was now so late that he would not reach the cabin until after dark at best, and to try to thread the uncertain trail with the cart after darkness came was out of the question, even should he encounter no wolves, which animals were not unlikely to attack him if given half an opportunity after nightfall.

The sparks pouring out of the great chimney of the cabin and the light shining through the chinks here and there, giving promise of a

warm fire and supper awaiting him, were a most pleasant sight to John as he galloped into the clearing and across the little valley to his home, in the early twilight. The night had come on cold and raw, with every indication of a considerable snowfall and an end of the bright days of autumn weather which had extended into December.

Ree came quickly out of the cabin as he heard John's approach.

"Trot along in, old boy, and warm yourself, I'll look after Neb," he said, wondering why John had not brought the old cart home, but waiting for another time to ask questions, for he knew his chum must be cold.

Ah, how pleasant it was to be snug and comfortable and safe once more, and with his mind chuck-full of interesting things to tell Ree, thought John, when he had washed his hands and face and spoken a pleasant word to the quiet Quaker sitting in a big, easy chair the boys had rigged up for him, with the half of a large hollow block of wood for a back. There

was the delicious sme saw Du bea n. sharpen his appetitekilled m a crisp, brown johnny-cake still smo:, the on the table. A little bark basket of hicnry nuts, to be cracked afterward as a relish and to help pass the time pleasantly, was on the rude chimney mantel. Only one thing marred his happiness. It was the thought of the awful murder of Black Eagle and of the Indian's body lying cold and still in the dark forest.

"Yes, sir, I guess it does feel good to be back again," said John most heartily, in reply to a remark the Quaker made, and soon Ree came in and supper was ready at once.

Theodore Hatch was helped up to the table, easy chair and all, and the two boys seated themselves on three-legged stools, of their own manufacture.

"I've got a heap to tell," said John, brimming over with anxiety to impart his information, but giving Ree a wink to signify that he could not tell all in the presence of the Quaker

warm hout letting the r await w the object of his most irney. John as l the "Go ahead; let's he the li e whole story," said h- Ree. "Mr. Hatch know ht where you went, and why. For, you see, he made a discovery to-day, and then I told him where Ichabod Nesbit was killed, and that you had gone to give his bones a respectable burial."

The gravity of Ree's tone caused John to ask, with some concern:

"A discovery?"

"Yes; he was robbed at the Eagle tavern of the half of a letter telling the location of a fortune hidden in the ground somewhere near Philadelphia. Now, don't open your eyes so. We should have guessed as much after seeing the letter those men, Duff and Dexter, and the landlord, had. The fact is, Mr. Hatch has not told his story more than what I have told you, but waited until you should be here to hear it."

"But tell thy own story first, friend. Mine can wait," the Quaker said.

"Well, Black Eagle's dead, and Duff and

Dexter killed him. I saw Duff shoot him down. They might have killed me, but I got away from them. Quilling, the landlord at the Eagle tavern, is with them, and—"

Really enjoying the sensation he had caused, John paused and looked at Ree, who was staring at him in astonishment, and at the Quaker, who was wringing his hands, greatly distressed, as he always was when he heard of the killing of human beings, or of any act of cruelty.

"The poor Indian! Father in heaven, forgive the slayers of so good a man as Black Eagle!" came prayerfully from the Quaker's lips.

"Did you know him—Black Eagle, I mean?" asked John in some surprise.

The Quaker nodded, and Ree, recovering from the depths of thought into which his mind had sunk, quickly said:

"Now, John, do tell all that happened! Begin at the time you left here! You saw three fellows and—"

"Just wait a jiffy," John interrupted. "I didn't see those fellows when I left here, any such thing!"

Ree smiled and allowed his friend to begin all over again and tell the story in his own way. This John did to the satisfaction of both his hearers, when once fairly started, and long before he had finished they were forgetting their supper, growing cold before them as they listened.

"Those chaps will be here, sooner or later. We've got to watch out for them," said Ree decisively, when John concluded. "What a horrible fellow that Duff is!"

"Such greed for gold—such greed for gold!" murmured Theodore Hatch sorrowfully. "Better, my dear, kind aunt, hadst thou thrown thy riches and thy jewels to the flames!"

"Does Mr. Hatch know we have the half of the letter which Ichabod Nesbit had?" John asked, in the midst of the questions Ree put to him, and the exclamation of the Quaker.

"I know thou hast the writing, friend. I know that, and promise me that Duff shall never have it!"

The old gentleman's eager earnestness was most intense. As he spoke he rose partially to his feet, leaning heavily on the table. His movement was so suddén, his manner so keenly earnest, that both Ree and John involuntarily started back in surprise, the Quaker bending toward them. As for an instant all paused in these attitudes, the hickory bark torch on the mantel and the blaze of the fire casting a flickering, ruddy glow upon them, a most dramatic picture was presented.

"Sit down, Mr. Hatch," said Ree quietly, hesitating but a moment. "Duff shall not have that portion of the letter which we found. It is your own, and we shall help you to prevent his getting it, if he tries."

"What we want to do," said John bluntly, "is to get hold of the part of the letter that Duff has."

"That depends on what Mr. Hatch says," Ree answered.

"It was my poor, dear aunt's money. It was to be Ichabod's and mine. Now Ichabod's gone, and—"

"All the money is yours," John put in as the Quaker hesitated.

"I wish very much to get it—it is all mine—I wish I could remember the wording of the part of the letter stolen from me. Alas, I cannot—and the half of the writing which Ichabod had, and for which I undertook so much, is now of no use to me. If Mr. Duff comes here, as you say he may, I shall ask him to give me the paper they took from my saddle-bags. I shall insist; for the writing can be of no use to him without that which goes with it."

"Of course not," said John, smiling at the old gentleman's simplicity.

"But tell your story now, Mr. Hatch, if you are not too tired," Ree urged. "Yet you must not over-estimate your strength, you know."

"To be sure," John quickly added, "I've

been wanting for a long time to know about that hidden treasure, and who hid it, and what for. Why, Ree and I talked about it many times, before we knew anything more about it than was in the letter which Nesbit had—"

"It is not much of a story," said the Quaker sadly, as John left the sentence unfinished, "but I will tell thee all I know and should have told thee long before but wished to be sure that I could trust thee."

"That was when you thought that your half of the fortune letter was in your saddle-bags," put in John slyly, while Ree could not but smile at the odd mixture of cupidity and simplicity which Mr. Hatch displayed, and his chum's gentle insinuation that the Quaker would not trust them until he found his much-prized letter missing.

"Yea, verily, I thought the letter was in my saddle-bags, and watched them so closely, fearing some one would suspect my secret. I could not endure to have them out of my sight, but never once did I doubt that the paper was

safely inside the little pocket I had made for it. And lo, it had been taken out far back at the Eagle tavern! Verily, it is in heaven that we should lay up golden treasure, where moth and rust cannot corrupt. But we must try to obtain the paper which was taken from me; aye, we must not fail to do that! Yet there must be no bloodshed—no fighting!"

Seeing how his chance remark had switched the Quaker from his story, John resolved to interrupt no more, nor did he. Mr. Hatch's mind, however, was apparently so divided between the thought of his loss and the narrative he was trying to relate that his progress was tediously slow. Not once did the boys suspect, however, that he was not telling the absolute truth.

The old gentleman explained to the two friends that when he first discovered that the letter had been removed from his saddle-bags, he suspected them of taking it; but when he had told Ree that the paper was missing and the latter at once remembered the writing in

the hands of Duff, Dexter and Quilling at the Eagle tavern, and the peculiar circumstances connecting Ichabod Nesbit's name with matter, and informed him of this, he knew his young hosts were innocent, and blamed himself harshly for doubting them.

The Quaker's story was a long one, and may be summed up substantially as follows:

He and Ichabod Nesbit, he stated, were half-brothers. Ichabod being the younger by nearly twenty years, there had never been much companionship between them, and they drifted farther and farther apart after the death of their mother. She had been an English girl and her first husband, Mr. Hatch's father, was an Englishman. With the family lived the mother's sister, whom they called "Aunt Harriet." A good many years after Mr. Hatch's father died, his mother had been married a second time to John Nesbit. Of this union Ichabod was born. At the breaking out of the Revolutionary war, Ichabod was a wild, worthless young fellow and left home presum-

ably to become a soldier, and Theodore Hatch, having become a Quaker, meanwhile, remained in Pennsylvania and saw his brother no more.

Time passed and the mother of the two half-brothers died. It then developed that property she had had in her own name had all been spent by her second husband, now deceased, and by Ichabod. But her sister, "Aunt Harriet," was still possessed of means, through fortunate investments in Philadelphia.

However, she was also possessed of a stern, Loyalist spirit, and though she privately admitted that King George III. was a "sap-head," in her own language, she strongly insisted that no matter who or what the king was, his subjects should be loyal. She resolved to return to England, and secretly disposed of her property, though at great sacrifice. She would not, however, take with her to England the wealth she had acquired in the Colonies whose rebel spirit she hated.

What was to be done? She determined to give all that she left behind to her nephews,

Theodore Hatch and Ichabod Nesbit. But as both were absent, she hit upon the plan of hiding her fortune, and then, after writing a careful description of the location of the hiding place, cut the writing in two, sending one-half to one nephew, the other to the other; and sending to each, also, a long letter explaining her plan and urging them to be more brotherly —Ichabod to be a better man and Theodore to be more charitable toward him.

To obtain her fortune they would thus be obliged to meet and put together the two halves of the written description of the spot where the money and valuables were secreted, or they could not find that hiding place. Well pleased with her novel scheme, the old lady bade the half-brothers an affectionate farewell in the letters which she wrote, and at the earliest opportunity departed for England, never to return.

Nearly a year passed, the Quaker stated, before the lawyer to whom the secret letters were entrusted found Theodore Hatch and delivered

his letter to him. The lawyer knew nothing of the letter's contents, and when the Quaker inquired of him concerning Ichabod Nesbit, he could give no information save that Ichabod had been in Philadelphia expecting to find his aunt and get some money; but she was gone, and he got instead the letter left for him.

"You can tell that pious half-brother o' mine that if he wants to do business with me he can hunt me up. I ain't goin' to look fer him."

This was the message Ichabod left for the Quaker, the latter said, but the lawyer, not knowing what the words meant, gave them no particular thought.

CHAPTER XI.

HELPING THE DELAWARES—DANGER.

"Thus thou knowest that much time passed ere I made any effort to find Ichabod," the Quaker concluded. "I did at last hear that he was living in Connecticut, and had settled down to peaceable pursuits. So, in the course of time, I set out to find him, and having no family and no kin, save Ichabod, I proposed to give all my time to it. With all my earthly possessions in my saddle-bags, therefore, I mounted my dearly beloved mare and set out. I have been traveling ever since. In time I learned of Ichabod's death. It was at the Eagle tavern that I heard of it. Friend Quilling there knew of the half-letter which Icha-

bod had, and knew of what I was in search, as soon as I inquired for Brother Nesbit. For Mr. Quilling and Ichabod were very friendly.

"I lodged at the Eagle tavern that night and from there set out to find the Indian, Black Eagle, and in a few weeks I located him. But he had taken nothing from the body of Ichabod Nesbit, for killing whom I took him sharply to task; for, though Ichabod was no credit to me, he was yet my half-brother, as I have said. Having learned from Black Eagle where Ichabod's body lay, beneath the stones along the trail at the foot of the hill, near where a giant tree was shattered by lightning, I went again to the Eagle tavern to get further information.

"I wished to know if Ichabod had any family or other relations of whom I might be ignorant. I found that he had none. And it was that night, as I lay at Mr. Quilling's establishment, that my letter was taken from my saddlebags, though they were in my room, and the greater wonder is that nothing else was stolen.

Not—not that I have anything of great value about me! Indeed, no!"

So did the Quaker finish his story, and neither of the lads who heard it for a moment thought he had not spoken the truth.

"It must have been soon afterward that we chanced to stop at the Eagle," said Ree, thoughtfully. "Quilling, being somewhat of a coward, and wanting help, took Duff and Dexter into his confidence, hoping to secure the other half of the fortune letter. They found Black Eagle and persuaded him to accompany them into this wilderness to find Nesbit's body, believing either that they would reach the spot ahead of you, Mr. Hatch, or that you would be unable to find where Nesbit was killed—at any rate, that they would get his half of the letter, and, already having yours, secure the fortune."

"Nay, they did not know I was coming to these desolate wilds," the Quaker answered. "Not that I would intentionally deceive—oh, no! but fearing that rough persons along the road might molest me, should my mission be

known, I caused Friend Quilling to believe (without staining my lips with lies, however) that I would be going back to Philadelphia, which I fervently hope I may yet do. But, oh, how sadly disfigured! Yet I shall not appear to disadvantage when my hat is on. That will cover the disfigurement then. No one will know my scalp is gone."

"And when those fellows discovered," said John, "that some one had reached Nesbit's grave ahead of them, and Duff found out that Black Eagle had directed you to the place, saying nothing to them of having done so, he deliberately killed the Indian. Now, what I was going to say is just this:—Duff will kill any one of us if he gets a chance, if he thinks he can get hold of that piece of paper by doing so! What we ought to do is to go straight to those robbers and compel them to give up the letter they stole from Mr. Hatch."

This suggestion gave the Quaker great uneasiness.

"No, no—we must not go near them! We

must keep away from them—oh dear, oh dear!"

All in all Mr. Hatch was so distressed and it was now so late, that without more ado, Ree drew in the latch-string, a signal that it was bed time.

The hickory bark torch had long since burned out. The fire was low and the interior of the cabin almost dark. Confident, therefore, that no one without would notice his action, even though watching the cabin, Ree next opened loop holes on all sides and he and John carefully looked out.

All was still and calm save for the usual sounds of animals in the surrounding forest and the blowing of the wind, swirling fine dry snow, with which the air was filled in all directions, even under the door of the cabin.

"Ring will wake us up if any one comes prowling around the cabin," said Ree, "and those chaps won't do more than try to steal that letter. Moreover, they cannot be sure that we have it. They naturally suppose that

Mr. Hatch got it, and it is not likely they are sure he is with us, or that we ever saw him, even. Their scheme will be to spy around and learn all they can before they begin to fight. As for their trying to swear upon us the killing of Black Eagle, I don't fear that a particle."

John acknowledged that Ree's thoughts were probably correct, and neither lad felt any alarm as they went to bed; and as for Theodore Hatch, he was already snoring.

The snow was several inches deep and the air biting cold when the pioneer boys arose in the morning, but they welcomed the change for two reasons: first, it gave them better success in hunting and trapping, by reason of their being able to track the game; and in the second place they would be able, by reason of the snow, speedily to discover the fact if human prowlers were about; for there are times when footprints tell as much as words could do.

It was a matter of regret to both the boys, however, now that the hunting was so good,

that they could not go together on account of the necessity of one remaining with Mr. Hatch. The Quaker was well and strong enough that he could have been left alone, but he was so afraid, and there really was such danger that Duff and his party would visit the cabin, that the lads deemed it unwise to take any chances.

The absence of the Indians—the warriors and hunters—was noticeable in the success the young Palefaces had with their traps and shooting; but it was also no less noticeable in the lack of business they had as traders, and to keep their store of furs piling up they hunted a great deal.

It was not an uncommon thing during the fine winter days which followed this first hard snow storm for John to go many miles from home in quest of game, while Ree devoted the day to chopping wood and clearing the land near the cabin, taking his turn at hunting the next day; but neither boy saw anything of Duff, Dexter or Quilling.

Occasionally wandering Indians came to the

cabin, but they reported, when questioned, that they had observed no Paleface strangers anywhere about. So a feeling of greater security from molestation by either white or red men came to the occupants of the little log house beside the river; and about this time, too, a discovery was made which afforded a new subject for thought and conversation.

Ree was hunting one day some distance from home in the direction of the town of the Delawares upon the lake, and came upon the tracks of a young bear, which for some reason had left its winter quarters or had failed to find any. He followed the trail of the cub to a large oak, and discovered the animal quietly resting in a fork of the tree, twenty feet from the ground. At one shot he brought the bear down, and, securing the pelt, it occurred to him to take the best portions of the meat to the Delaware town as a good-will offering to the old men and squaws there. He would inquire what had been heard of Captain Pipe, and might also get news of Duff's party, or of the

lone Indian, who had not been seen for a long time.

Within an hour of the time the thought came to him, Ree was at the Delaware village. He could not but notice how lonely an air it had. Even the dogs seemed not to bark so vigorously as usual, but sniffed hungrily, leaping up at the bear meat upon his shoulder.

"How, neighbors and friends," called Ree, as the noise of the dogs brought the Indians, Gentle Maiden among the rest, from the cabins, and stepping up to the daughter of Captain Pipe, he said:

"Gentle Maiden, I shot a young bear near by, and I have brought some fresh meat for you and your people, if you care for it; and if you do not, the dogs may be glad of it."

With a graceful courtesy, which may have been all her own, or taught her, more likely, by the Moravian missionaries, of whom, as a child, she had learned to speak English, the Indian girl accepted the gift, saying most ear-

nestly, as the other Indians, half clad, wrapped in skins and worn blankets, crowded near:

"Truly the Great Spirit has sent you—the Great Spirit of the Red Children of the forests, or the God of the Palefaces—has sent you and this food. For days and nights—more than on the fingers of both my hands could be told—my father's people have had no meat—only the flesh of the dogs we killed."

Ree would have interrupted the girl to tell his regret that he and John had not known their needs to have helped them before, but she would not permit it; for Gentle Maiden, now really a young woman, though girlish in appearance in her short skirt and embroidered leggins, continued:

"Very little corn have we left, and of beans none; and no powder here for the one gun left with us by my father's warriors. Yet come, rest, and eat of what we have and our people shall prepare more."

Giving the bear meat to some squaws to be quickly cooked, Gentle Maiden and her mother

led the way to the cabin of Captain Pipe, somewhat better than the others, though poor enough and now half filled with smoke from the fire built in the center of the earthen floor, beneath a hole in the roof.

"I had hoped to find Chief Hopocon (Captain Pipe) back from his fighting expedition," said Ree, pretending to eat of the scanty quantity of parched corn placed before him, for hospitality's sake, a courtesy the Indians never forgot.

"No, the fighting may not be over. There may be another great battle," said the girl.

"Another battle?" the boy ejaculated. "Has there been one, then?"

"Has the white brother not heard?—a great battle, in which my father's warriors and many more drove the soldiers of the Long-knives even as scared birds before a mighty storm, and—"

It was in the mind of Gentle Maiden to complete the sentence by saying, "and took many, many scalps," but she wished to spare the white boy's feelings, and hesitated.

"How do you know this?" Ree questioned, quickly guessing the words left unsaid.

"A runner came to tell of the mighty battle and to call all the people to be ready to drive every Paleface from our lands."

"Tell me more of the battle," Ree said, quietly. "Was it long ago? And where was the fighting?"

"There," answered Gentle Maiden in a hushed but still slightly triumphant tone, pointing to the westward, "a journey of seven suns, it may be, near the river called Wabash. The Paleface chief Sain Clair (General St. Clair) and many soldiers had come into the land of my father's people and his friends to build their forts and to drive the Indians from their homes. It was at the coming of day that the battle began and the white soldiers and the warriors were many as the trees of the forest. Hard and long was the fighting, but before the sun was in the middle of the sky our warriors had conquered—our warriors had driven the white chief Sain Clair and all the soldiers from

their camps, and they fled before my father's people even as leaves when the winds blow hard."

"Were many killed?"

Ree asked the question calmly, though he could hardly restrain his feelings or keep from showing the resentment in his heart that the Indian girl should seem to boast of the victory over the white men. And yet he knew that the savages had been abused and imposed upon. He knew that their children were taught to look upon the whites as their enemies and as people of "two tongues," who would deceive and cheat and steal. Especially was this true in this land of the Ohio, where the awful massacre of nearly a hundred peaceable Indians by white soldiers was still fresh in the minds of the savages.

Gentle Maiden did not at once answer the question, for in her heart she felt that Ree, who had been her father's friend, was angered by the news she told him and by her tone.

"Many will rise only in the spirit world,"

she said at last, "many Palefaces and many warriors. Never has my father told me of any battle where the ground was so covered by the killed."

"It is too bad, Gentle Maiden," the white boy returned thoughtfully, and then, thinking suddenly of that unknown, lone Indian of whom he had seen or heard nothing for some time, he remarked:

"Perhaps the Indian who has been fighting the white men alone in these forests here was also in the battle. I have not seen him for a long time."

"He was not in the battle, but a new scalp hangs at his belt."

"Have you seen him? Has he been here?"

"He has not been here. The runner I told you of saw him; and a white hunter lies dead by the stream named the White Woman. It is his own battle the red brother fights, and he will go to war in no other way."

"Who is he, Gentle Maiden?"

"My father, Chief Hopocon, may tell you. He is not of my father's people."

Knowing that further questioning would be useless, Ree said no more about that matter, but sought to ascertain to what extent his aid and John's would be acceptable in furnishing meat for the people still remaining in the Delaware village. He quickly found that, whatever her feelings toward the Palefaces in general might be, the daughter of Captain Pipe looked upon himself and his friend in quite a different way, and she gladly heard his suggestion that, as they killed more game than they needed for themselves, he would see to it that the Delawares should not want.

This suggestion cost Ree considerable discomfort of mind, notwithstanding, and he was by no means certain that John would welcome the proposition after he had heard of the battle of which the girl told (the defeat of St. Clair, Nov. 4, 1791). And indeed it did seem to Ree himself almost unbearable to consider that he and John should be furnishing food to the

helpless members of Captain Pipe's village, while that honest but cruel and defiant chieftain and his braves were making war on the whites—his own people; also that they should be giving assistance to those who upheld the mysterious lone Indian in his secret, sneaking attacks upon solitary hunters and travelers. But he bade Gentle Maiden and the other Indians who came to see him off, a friendly farewell, and set out for home, thinking deeply of all he had heard.

The thought would come to him that he and John were bound to have trouble; for, though they might retain the friendship and good will of Captain Pipe, it was more than probable that he would be unable to restrain his warriors, and especially the warriors of other tribes, the Wyandots, Senecas and, most of all, the Mingoes, from making a bold attack upon them, now that their blood was heated by a deeper hate and their minds inflamed by the victory they had won. So, wearily, Ree plodded through the snow.

CHAPTER XII.

BANDS OF BLACK.

A bitterly cold night was closing in when Ree reached the cabin.

"I rather guess there will be no prowlers around this evening," he remarked, as he shook the snow from his coonskin cap in front of the roaring fireplace, and held his hands to the blaze to warm them.

"Ree," said John, ignoring the remark, "Mr. Hatch wants a feather bed. We were talking about it as you came in. I told him we could make him one from turkey feathers."

"So we can," was the answer. "We'll begin saving feathers right away."

"It is because I have decided to remain here

until I can go in quest of the rascals who have the missing part of my aunt's letter," the Quaker put in, very seriously. "For poor Ichabod is dead—dead and gone—and the money, lads, is mine—all mine. Oh, I must obtain the paper which was stolen from me! All mine—the money and all—it is all mine," he murmured, and from time to time repeated —"All mine—all mine!"

Much thinking of the hidden treasure and his assertion that he was the only creature known to be alive who had any valid claim to the fortune, seemed fast to be making Theodore Hatch a covetous, disagreeable old man. He had changed wonderfully in the short time since the boys had known him.

"Thou shalt stay as long as we do, if thou likest, friend," said Ree, adopting the Quaker manner of speaking. "But the Indians have fought a great battle near the Wabash river and sadly defeated General St. Clair and his troops. What the result will be as concerns ourselves, we must wait and see."

"What's that?" John exclaimed.

All that he had learned from Gentle Maiden, Ree then told his friends, and he told them also of the destitute circumstances in which he found the people still remaining in Captain Pipe's village.

There arose in John's mind at once the same question that had perplexed Ree—should they help these needy Indians, while those who ought to be at home providing for them were fighting the white troops and, no doubt, killing settlers and plundering and burning their cabins?

"After all, we can't let the poor Redskins starve," he said at last.

"Just what I said to myself on the way home," Ree replied.

Theodore Hatch had risen and was walking up and down the one tiny room of the cabin, despondent and deeply sorrowing, as was usual with him when he heard news of bloodshed. He spoke no word, but at last, still deep in thought, laid himself down upon his bed and buried his face in the coarse pillow formed in part by his

closely-watched saddle bags. His position had not changed when the two boys were ready to go to bed, and, thinking he slept, they covered him over with a blanket and bearskin.

All night the wind howled through the valley of the Cuyahoga, bending the strongest limbs of the forest trees and snapping dead branches off short with a sudden crackling which added to the threatening noises all about. All night the snow went flying before the gale, piling itself in drifts upon the log doorstep of the lonely cabin, against every fallen tree and against every rock and bluff for miles around,—in the haunted spot where the sunken eyes of the dead Black Eagle stared upward through their mantle of white, and beside the smoky hut where Gentle Maiden knelt before the fire and besought the Great Spirit to send aid to her father's people.

All night the storm raged and even the dismal voices of the wolves were stilled and they slunk into their cavern homes; so much the safer were the timid deer seeking shelter among the low-

boughed trees of the ravines. All night the troubled Quaker lay face downward upon his bed, his mind struggling between his love for gold and his wish to do right. On their own bed in the corner, Return Kingdom and John Jerome soundly slept or, partially awakened from time to time by the fierceness of the tempest, dreamed the hours away.

The coming of morning showed the hours of darkness to have been very busy ones for the storm king.

"I think we will not be venturing far from the cabin to-day," said John, looking out.

"Lucky there is no need of doing so," Ree answered.

"Dear friends"—it was the Quaker who spoke, and his voice was strangely soft and low, reminding the boys at once of the caressing way in which he always addressed his mare, Phœbe —"whatever the depth of snow or the cold, I am going to the town of the Delawares to carry them whatever food thee will spare me for them."

"Why, you mustn't think of doing so, Mr. Hatch," said Ree. "I do not believe the Indians are really suffering, as yet."

"They need food, and more than food for their bodies merely," was the answer. "They are but ignorant savages, but bravely they are bearing all the suffering which comes to them because their strong men have gone forth to fight for what they righteously believe to be their own; and I shall go among them, and even as our illustrious William Penn would do were he alive and here, I shall both feed and teach them."

Some great change had come over Theodore Hatch. But the day before he would have shown but little interest in any subject save that of the hidden fortune. Now he did not mention it, but bundled up and visited the log stable adjoining the cabin to tell Phœbe his plans, as he had so often told the gentle animal of the treasure, saying over and over again, "All mine—all mine."

The depth of the snow was so great and the

way so difficult that, finding the Quaker determined to follow out the plan he had formed, the two boys agreed that Ree should accompany him, mounted on Neb, while Mr. Hatch rode his own horse. With a generous supply of provisions, therefore, the two set out, leaving John alone to guard the cabin and the Quaker's prized saddle bags, and to cut and store near the house a stock of wood for the fireplace.

Well-nigh buried beneath the snow, Ree and his companion found the village of the Delawares a desolate place indeed, upon their arrival there after nearly three hours of floundering through great drifts and over fallen trees and brush, the trail being so hidden by its spotless cloak that to follow it closely was quite impossible.

The meat the white men carried to the Indians, however, was really badly needed. It became evident at once that the whole truth had not been revealed to Ree by Gentle Maiden—because of her pride, perhaps—and several of the oldest and most feeble of the Indian men

and women were genuinely sick solely for want of food. The children, too, though bearing their suffering with true Indian grit,—not a cry or whimper escaping them,—were most desperately hungry.

"Our dogs knew our distress and their danger, and our women could not come near to them to kill one for eating. Always did they run away, howling or sometimes almost speaking words of fear—or—or woe," said Gentle Maiden, telling of the suffering of her father's people, while Ree and Mr. Hatch warmed themselves at the fire in the chief's cabin. At the same time the girl's mother was carrying more wood to make a brighter blaze, and the hungry Delawares were feeding themselves ravenously in their own cabins or beside a fire built near the center of the space the irregular collection of huts enclosed.

"Thy father will not travel far through snow so deep," the Quaker said in answer. "He and his fighting men will be slow in reaching home, therefore. Yet, young friend, I shall come

among thee with food for thee and thine until he shall return. Is it true that thou wert taught by the Moravian preachers, my dear?"

"The missionaries trained my tongue to speak the language of the Palefaces. They were very kind. Still their God is not the god of the Indians, my father says. My father has lived long. He knows much."

The quick intuition of the girl in recognizing the Quaker as one who would wish to teach the Delawares the religion of the white people, and her way of telling him that his efforts would meet with poor appreciation, amused Ree, though he sincerely wished his friend all success.

"Dear child, thy Father in heaven is all wise and approves the love thou bearest thy earthly father. Goodness is in thy heart, and—see, though one of thy own people, it may be, has done this, yet do I come to thee as a friend who seeks only to do thee good."

As he spoke, the Quaker bent down and pointed to the scalpless top of his head. With

scarcely a tremor Gentle Maiden followed his words and action and realized at once what he had undergone.

"Yea, verily, my head was cut thus, and I was left for dead, but forgiveness is in my heart," the Quaker said.

"My father's people did not that," said the girl, with somewhat of haughtiness in her voice. "The Paleface brother was shot by one who roams far and alone. He is not of my father's tribe. His war is his own war. He comes and goes—now here—now far—much far off. On his arm he marks with paint one band of black for every Paleface killed. Many bands are on his arm. Many Palefaces he has killed. Never will his war be ended. He must not know my Paleface preacher brother, that he thinks he killed, still lives. Yet it is his war. Gentle Maiden may not speak more."

Theodore Hatch was considerably puzzled by the girl's speech; but Ree, quickly understanding her, explained to him that for each person he killed the prowling Indian, whoever he might

be, pricked in black a circlet about his arm, in addition to taking the scalp; that for some reason he would never cease his attacks upon the whites, and that if he discovered that one man, whom he supposed he had killed, was still alive, he would seek to make that man's death certain, or kill some other man instead.

"The young Paleface speaks well. Gentle Maiden cannot tell so many words of English now as when her tongue was trained to speak them," the Indian girl said, confirming Ree's explanation of her warning to the Quaker.

"I shall see him and reason with him. It is wrong that his heart should be set against all white people, though many may have misused him. Where shall I find him?"

"He comes and goes. He is not of the Delawares. His war is his own war. I have spoken," the girl made answer.

"I tried to have Gentle Maiden tell me of this lone Indian myself, but the Delawares will not say who he is," said Ree, fearing the Quaker might give offense by pressing the maiden to

tell more than she was willing to do. "He is not a Delaware, yet Captain Pipe believes he has some just cause for making war on the whites, secretly and alone, and does not attempt to stop him. Am I right, Gentle Maiden?"

The Indian girl nodded her head and said simply, "Yes."

The conversation turned to other subjects, both Mr. Hatch and Ree being anxious to learn to what extent the people of the village would need assistance during the winter, in case Captain Pipe should not return. It quickly became apparent that the Indians would require a great deal of aid. They had almost nothing left to eat, and every cache (holes in the earth in which corn or other provisions were hidden) had been emptied.

The prospect that on the white neighbors of the savages would fall the task of providing them with meat was not, to Ree, a pleasing one. True, it was a duty and must be performed, but it would take the time of himself or John the greater part of every day, he quickly saw. The

Quaker was undoubtedly willing to do his part, but his mind was bent more upon the spiritual than the bodily welfare of the Indians, and, moreover, he would scarcely shoot a deer even if he had an opportunity.

Promising to return in a day or two, Ree and Mr. Hatch took their leave, mounted their horses and started homeward. The wind was still blowing in sudden gusts and was bitterly cold. The trail through the snow, made in reaching the Indian town, however, rendered the return journey easier, and good progress was being made when, as the two rode along the edge of a high bluff between the village and their cabin, a strong wind caught the broad brim of the Quaker's hat and sent it sailing over the edge of the steep hillside, into the gully.

"I'll get it for you," said Ree, who was considerably in advance of his companion, and, reaching a place where the descent was less precipitous, he rode into the ravine, then back

to a point even with that where Mr. Hatch had paused.

An odd picture the Quaker presented as he sat astride his mare, leaning slightly forward, his uncovered, scalpless head exposed to the wind, while he held out his arm pointing to the spot where his beaver lay.

Ree glanced up to note the direction which the outstretched finger indicated. Almost at the same moment a terrific shriek sounded high and loud above the roaring wind, followed by another and another.

In an instant Ree's rifle was at his shoulder. No sign of any living creature could be seen, however, save Theodore Hatch sitting bolt upright in his saddle staring in vacant astonishment across the ravine.

"For goodness sake, what is it?" eagerly cried the boy.

"Verily, I think it was the young Indian who tried to kill me—who has my scalp," muttered Mr. Hatch, in tones of awe.

With all haste Ree recovered the Quaker's

hat and made speed to reach his side. But the Indian had vanished.

"He went so very suddenly I scarcely saw him," the Quaker explained. "I only heard him scream."

The meaning of it all came to Ree's mind like a flash. The lone Indian, prowling along the opposite side of the ravine, had been attracted by the noise of their horses, and slipped up to find what was to be seen. He had come just in time to discover the Quaker in a ghost-like attitude, pointing into the valley meaningly, while his scalped crown and rigid quiet added to the supernatural appearance he made. Recognizing the horse and the rider, the latter a man whose scalp was even then fastened to his own belt, the Indian had been terrified beyond measure—thinking he saw a ghost—the ghost of one of his victims.

"I shall be greatly mistaken if he does not follow us to find out just exactly what he did see," said Ree, explaining his supposition concerning the Indian's fright. "There is no doubt

but what he is watching from a distance at this very minute."

And Ree was right. The lone Indian did follow at a respectful distance, and the fact that he did so was a fortunate thing for the young pioneers, as they afterward discovered.

CHAPTER XIII.

A CRY FROM THE DARKNESS.

"I'm mighty glad you're home," was John's greeting as Ree and Mr. Hatch dismounted before the door. "There has been somebody prowling around the woods across the clearing, and it worried me. Honest truth, I believe it was that man Duff, though he looked like an Indian."

"It was an Indian, all right," Ree confidently answered, "our old friend, the vanisher. We, also, saw him, or rather, heard him, and I guess he was more scared than we were, wasn't he, Mr. Hatch?"

"Verily, I was much frightened myself," the

Quaker answered, and then Ree told all about the experience beside the ravine.

John could not be certain that the person he had seen was not the lone Indian. It was during the afternoon, he said, that he noticed a movement among the bushes on the hillside across the clearing, and watching more closely, had made certain that some one was spying on him and the cabin.

"It made me so nervous that I got to thinking maybe some one was slipping up behind be, or maybe some one would get into the shanty while my back was turned, and all of a sudden I found myself as scared as I could be, and I jumped into the house and shut the door, almost sure that I was going to be killed the very next second. Ring clawed at the door a full minute before I could gather up my courage, and laughing because I felt myself so frightened, opened the door for him to come in."

"It was your imagination that got away with you," said Ree, smiling. "If a chap just imagines that some one is watching him, waiting to

shoot or grab him, he can scare himself worse than he would be if he really saw some one just ready to jump onto him."

The conversation turned to other subjects then, the boys having agreed that as the wind and snow would by this time have covered up the tracks the prowler made, it would be of no use to try to find them and so determine who the fellow was. It was already dark, moreover, and so stormy a night that neither boy cared to leave the bright fireplace unless it were necessary.

Supper was over and Ree and John and Mr. Hatch, snug and comfortable, were discussing the situation of the Delawares when to their astonishment there came a knocking at the door. In all the time since the cabin was built no visitor had announced his presence in that way.

"Great guns! Who can it be?" murmured John, but Ree hastily arose to answer the call.

"Come in, come in," came the latter's voice cheerily, as the figure of a man crouching close to the wall, as if to escape the raw, cold wind,

was revealed by the firelight when the door was opened.

Softly the person glided into the room and close to the fire, spreading out his hands to the welcome heat, but turning his face away as if the bright glare hurt his eyes. His dress and long black hair and tawny skin indicated that he was an Indian, probably of the Mohawk tribe—a Mingo, at least—but neither of the boys remembered having seen him before.

"It is a cold night," said John, hospitably moving back from the fire to give the visitor more room.

"Ugh!"

The stranger uttered no other word, but, Indian fashion, shrugged his shoulders as if to answer that there was no doubt as to the truth of the remark.

"Have you traveled far?" John asked.

"Heap," the fellow answered, glancing around to note where Ree was placing the rifle he had put in the boy's hands as a sign of friendship, upon entering.

"Get our friend some meat, John," said Ree, standing the rifle in a corner. "Sit down and warm yourself," he next said, addressing the mysterious caller, pushing a stool toward him.

The fellow seated himself, but still turned his face away, even while eating the cold venison which John placed on another stool beside him. Again John tried to get him to talk, but he answered only in the briefest way, and said nothing except when directly spoken to. Of his own accord a little later, however, he did speak, saying: "Me good Injun; me sleep here," pointing to the floor near the fire.

"Yes, you may sleep there," said Ree, but behind the visitor's back he gave John a look which said, "We must watch this chap," and his chum winked and nodded.

Theodore Hatch seemed quite undisturbed by the presence of the unexpected guest, but continued to talk to the boys of his plans for teaching and caring for the Indians at Captain Pipe's town. Then he drifted from that subject to wondering whether the missing part of

the paper describing the hiding place of his aunt's fortune would ever fall into his hands.

"Of one thing we must make sure," he said, "the letter must never come into the possession of the scoundrels who robbed me. I shall never use—verily if I am to work as a missionary among these poor Indians,—I shall never need, the money my poor mother's sister secreted for my unfortunate brother and myself; yet shall it remain hidden rather than that it should be found and gambled away and spent for rum by the wicked men who have tried to obtain it."

"Heap tired—Injun heap tired," said the strange creature still toasting his hands close to the fire, though it was now so warm that the others had moved back from the blaze, and John was even lying on the bed of skins and blankets in the farthest corner.

"Yes, strange friend, lie down and rest thyself," answered the Quaker complacently, taking a large bearskin from his own bed, and handing it to the fellow.

Without a word the latter wrapped the robe

about his head and shoulders and threw himself in a corner—the very corner in which Ree had put his rifle.

"I, too, am weary," said Mr. Hatch, and removing his coat and boots he lay down on his own bed and was soon snoring.

Still Ree sat thinking, and John hummed a tune softly to himself as he lay restfully on his back, carelessly wondering whether their visitor spoke the truth when he said, "Me good Injun." All the fear he had felt during the afternoon was forgotten. As usual he was trusting to Ree to see that precautions were taken and that no harm came to them. In the corner the man under the bearskin seemed sound asleep.

"What was that?"

Ree and John leaped to their feet together. Sharp and clear above the rattle and roar of the nightwind came the report of a rifle, fired at no great distance.

"No, no! Don't open the door!" John called,

as his more fearless chum sprang forward to look out.

The words came too late. In a trice Ree had the door swung wide and was peering into the gloom, shading his eyes with his hands.

"Help! Help!"

It was the voice of a white man, borne on the wind clearly and distinctly, out of the darkness from the edge of the forest.

"Who—who-o-o!—who-o who-oo!"

As if a giant owl were calling from the blackness of the storm, came these further cries, but in the sounds there was something strangely like a human voice.

"For mercy's sake, Ree, don't stand in the open door that way! You'll be killed," cried John, drawing his friend away.

"Who are you? This way—this way!"

These were Ree's words and he yelled them at the top of his voice.

"Get your gun, John, we must find out who that is," he hurriedly said.

Even as he spoke, and before John could

close the door, a heavy figure leaped between them from behind, dodged sidewise out of the light, and in a moment vanished. It was the mysterious visitor.

"Halt, there! Stand, or I'll put a bullet through you!"

It was Ree who called, but he spoke too late. His words received not the slightest attention, and in another second John succeeded in slamming the door tightly shut, while Theodore Hatch, awake but decidedly bewildered, sat up in bed and stared vacantly.

"What does it mean?"

John dropped almost helplessly upon a stool, completely mystified and not a little alarmed.

"We will have to find out," said Ree, his lips compressed in determination. "Do you want to go out with me to look around?"

"Well, now, look a-here, Ree, we better see what we can make of this business before ever you put your foot out of the door! It looks a lot to me as though some one had set a trap for us. That owl's hooting was a man's voice as

plain as anything I ever heard. And that chap who was in here may have been an Indian, but he was not a 'good Injun,' as he said, by a long sight; so be reasonable."

"Which means be careful," Ree smiled, examining his rifle and slipping a pistol into his belt. "It is a mighty queer affair, and the meaning of it is what I want to find out."

"Verily, I believe it means robbery," spoke up Theodore Hatch, tenderly rubbing the scalpless crown of his head, as if that would help him to recollect his scattered thoughts. "The Indian tried to seize my saddle bags from under my head, before he jumped through the door. I had just wakened up, and scarcely knowing what I was doing, I let fly my fist at him and struck him quite a severe blow, I fear, just below the ear. I think—"

"Duff!" interrupted Return Kingdom, and into the one word he put so much force and expression that it spoke volumes.

"Honest truth, Ree, that was what I thought from the first, but I could not understand how

he could disguise himself so well. He kept his face away from me, but I had one good look at him. The paint must have hid his smallpox marks."

"I was about to say that I think—and hope, indeed, that he was not much hurt," the Quaker went on, just a little impatient that he had been interrupted.

"It was that fellow Duff, beyond a doubt," said Ree. "He expected to get your saddle bags, thinking he would find the half of the cut-in-two letter in them. Somehow or other his game was spoiled. Those cries of help were genuine—no shamming about them!"

"What in the world did that hooting like an owl mean then?" demanded John. "I think the game was that Dexter or that miserable Quilling or both of them were stationed outside to fire a gun and attract our attention. Duff believed that we would then run out to see what was wrong, and he, having got inside by playing the Indian, would then get that letter."

"Well, you were right, old boy, in one thing,

and that is that there is no reason why we should go out and hunt them up to-night. We will just stay quietly inside and one of us must keep an eye open for their coming back. My, how the wind howls! I really pity those poor chaps, that they are out in it."

"Pity your grandmother!" ejaculated John.

"What a world of wickedness it is," sighed Theodore Hatch, dolefully shaking his head and rubbing his hands.

"You and John go to sleep now, Mr. Hatch. There will be no further trouble, I guess," Ree said to the old man kindly, after some further talk, and as the Quaker did lie down, John stretched himself on his own bed, having first buckled on a pistol and placed his rifle within reach.

The exciting incident gave Ree plenty to think about as he gazed keenly through a loop hole, vainly trying to catch sight of some spark of fire or other sign which would show him the whereabouts of the men who had so unexpectedly appeared in the vicinity. The snow-filled

air and thick darkness prevented his seeing anything, however, and the shrieking wind was the only sound which came to him.

John fell asleep at last and Ree did not disturb him until at the first peep of daylight when he went into the shed to care for the two horses, first calling to his chum to get breakfast started.

The wind had gone down with the coming of dawn, but the snow was deep in all directions and the weather was more intensely cold than on the previous day. This, however, did not deter the young pioneers from starting out on a short tour of investigation as soon as the morning meal was over. And Theodore Hatch cautioned them as they set out to use gentle means rather than force, with any one they met.

Not a trace of the footprints of the mysterious visitor of the night before were to be seen. The wind and snow had covered the tracks completely. With the spirit of true woodsmen, notwithstanding, the lads made for that point at the edge of the timber from which they believed

the call for help had come. Even in the woods they found nothing. The snow was over their knees on a level and in many places the drifts were almost impassable.

"It is no use floundering around this way. Let's go home and get our snowshoes," Ree suggested, and John needed no urging. They turned and passed out of the edge of the woods a little to the right of the point at which they had entered. A hundred feet from the timber Ree paused.

"I thought I struck my foot against something—something like the body of a bear, or a wolf, maybe," he said.

"Froze to death," John, who was a few yards in advance, answered carelessly, not looking back, thinking it must be some sick or wounded wolf that had perished in the storm.

"Murdered, is more like it!"

Ree's voice was not raised above his ordinary tone, but the deep significance of his remark caused his companion to turn quickly around. The next instant he was ploughing through the

drifts at a run to where Ree stood, bending over something in the snow.

It was the body of Quilling, late landlord of the Eagle tavern. In his still open eyes was a look of abject terror, and a cry of pain and fear seemed to have stopped half uttered on his lips. From his head the scalp was missing, and where his hat still lay, and under the body, the snow was red with blood.

The crimson stain upon his clothing near the left shoulder told the manner of his death. A bullet had found his heart.

CHAPTER XIV.

CAPTURED.

"I'll bet I can tell whose work this is!"

In an awed, half-frightened tone, as he looked upon the terrible scene, John spoke.

Ree was already on his knees in the snow trying to learn if there was not some spark of life remaining. There was none. The body was cold and in places the flesh was frozen hard.

"The lone Indian's," he slowly answered John's remark. "Poor Quilling. The only wonder is that the wolves have not been here before us. It was Quilling who cried out for help, last night, John."

"I suppose we will never know just what did happen, but it looks more and more as if a trap

of some kind had been laid for us, now doesn't it? And while Quilling and Dexter waited, perhaps, that prowling Redskin shot him. I only wish it had been Duff who was killed."

As though they had talked the matter all over and agreed what they should do, though scarcely a word was spoken, the boys tramped up the hill to their cabin. With an axe and shovel they returned to where the body of Quilling lay. At the foot of a beech tree which they proposed to save, as the clearing of their land progressed, they laboriously dug a shallow grave.

"I would rather Mr. Hatch should know nothing about this, he is always so broken up by such things," Ree said thoughtfully, as he leaned on his shovel, "but it does seem a pity to bury the poor fellow without a prayer or anything. Shall we tell the Quaker?"

A suggestion from Ree was sufficient always, for John. Theodore Hatch was informed of what had taken place. With tears in his eyes

he repeated a few solemn words of the scriptures and bowed his head in silent prayer.

Deeply impressed, and on the verge of breaking out in sobs, though this man whose clay they buried, that wild animals might not tear the body to pieces, had been their enemy, the brave boys who performed for him the last deed of kindliness they could upon this earth, filled in the frozen mold around and above the corpse. So passed from the sight of men, far in the forest's fastnesses, all that was mortal of Henry Quilling, and the ploughshares of later days have long since mingled his dust with the soil.

"It is another warning to us to watch out for that sneaking savage," John remarked for the fourth or fifth time as the three returned slowly to the cabin.

"We must not forget our Delaware friends," spoke Ree more briskly, hoping to turn the thoughts of the Quaker in a new channel; for the old gentleman was deeply depressed by what had occurred. "Do you think we better pay them another visit to-day, Mr. Hatch?"

"Verily, it is a sad business," said the Quaker, "but our first duty always must be to the living. Yea, we must go to the Delawares."

So it was agreed, John, however, taking Ree's place in the journey.

The Quaker and Ree had had trouble, indeed, the day before, in getting through the drifted snow to the Delaware town, but he and John had still more difficulty this day, for the snow was deeper and the great banks were in many places breast high against their horses. And such was the old gentleman's solicitude for his mare that, as they toiled slowly along, he more than once would have turned back, had not the dapple-gray shown a perfect willingness to bear him through the very deepest drifts to the best of its ability. John, mounted on Neb, fell behind, and let the Quaker's horse break the path.

"It is not the difference in the strength, but in the intelligence of the beasts," was the comment Mr. Hatch made. "Thy horse is stronger than my own, but Phœbe understands precisely

what is desired of her—sweet Phœbe," and he patted the mare's shoulder lovingly.

The Indian town was reached at last and John shook hands with Gentle Maiden cordially as though she were an old and very dear friend. She had not seen him for long and though, according to the Indian custom, she showed no surprise or especial pleasure at the meeting, it was easily seen that she was pleased.

Still, when the girl engaged in conversation with the Quaker, John left them and picked his way through the snow to different huts of the village, rallying the boys and girls with a smile and a pleasant word and giving even the old squaws to understand that he felt perfectly at home among them. Seeing a bow and arrows hanging on a forked pole in one of the bark cabins, John took them down and called to an Indian lad, ten or twelve years of age, to show him how well he could shoot. The bow was about four and a half feet in length, and made of seasoned hickory, about an inch in thickness at the middle and a quarter of an inch or less,

the narrow way, near the ends. About the parts where the greatest strain came on the bow at either side of the center, the wood was tightly wound with strong strips of deer or some other skin.

John had often seen the bows and arrows of the Indians, though most of the savages were now supplied with firearms, but he examined this bow very carefully. The arrows, too, he looked at with critical eyes, really surprised to note how cleverly they were made. The shaft of each was light but strong and straight, nearly, if not quite, three feet in length. In the larger and heavier end, arrow heads, or points, of varying size, laboriously chipped out in flint, were fastened by splitting the shaft and binding the flint tightly in the opening so made with fine, strong cords of rawhide. Similarly a feather, or in some cases two or three feathers, were fastened at the small end of the shaft to make the arrow fly true to the archer's aim. The bow and especially the arrows, with their sharp, heavy points, were such dangerous looking

weapons that John inquired of the Indian boy, partly in Delaware, partly in English:

"Can you not kill turkeys or deer with the bow, since your warriors are away and your people have no meat?"

"No shoot bows more—shoot guns," the lad said.

"Yes, I know," John answered, "but when you have no guns, why not use the bow?"

"Little Wolf, he shoot bow—heap good," said the Indian lad, whose own name, John afterward discovered, was Flying Fish.

"Let's see him shoot," the white boy replied, and Little Wolf, who was even then peeking in at the door of the hut, while he held a bearskin about him for warmth, quickly disappeared. In a half minute, however, he returned bringing, as John correctly guessed, his own bow and arrows. They were like those Flying Fish had, only quite elaborately ornamented with colors dyed in the wood, showing that Little Wolf had much pride in the weapons.

Without a word the lad, who was of about the

same age as the other Indian boy, laid off the bearskin he wore, leaving his shoulders bare to the biting cold. (His lower limbs and waist were clothed in leggins and trousers.) He threw back his head, shaking his long hair away from his face and eyes, and while John intently watched him, pointed to a leaf on the outermost branch of an oak tree, fifty feet or more from the ground and as many yards from where he stood. With careful aim he drew the string and bent the bow, which, being very stiff and strong, required much strength.

For a second he paused as the tip of the arrow rested on the bow-center, then suddenly sent the shaft flying so quickly and swiftly that the white boy nearly missed seeing it. Straight and true the arrow sped, piercing the leaf on the bough of the oak and carrying it off as neatly as if it had been plucked by hand.

In genuine astonishment and admiration, John gave his leg a vigorous slap, and diving his hand into his pocket found a small bone comb which he presented to Little Wolf then

and there; and to prevent hard feelings he gave Flying Fish a similar present.

So pleased were the Indian lads and so friendly after receiving these gifts, that it occurred to John to improve the opportunity to see what he could learn from them about the prowling Redskin who seemed ever to seek and lose no chance to kill and scalp white hunters, always traveling alone, and, as Gentle Maiden had said, carrying on "his own war."

"Killdeer, young Long-knife says," Flying Fish explained to Little Wolf, who seemed not to understand at once to whom the white boy referred.

"Is that his name? He is not a Delaware, is he? He is not one of Captain Pipe's people?" John asked.

"Killdeer, he comes quick—like wind; gone—like wind. No one see him."

And hard as John tried to draw further information about the mysterious Indian from the savage youths, he could learn nothing addi-

tional. They gave evasive answers or failed, or pretended to fail, to understand him.

Half inclined to be cross at the youngsters, though they amused him not a little, John changed the subject and made the boys promise to hunt with bows and arrows and to bring peltries to the cabin to exchange for knives and trinkets.

His chief object in this was to persuade the lads to do some hunting and thus provide food for themselves and others of the Delaware town; and even had he thought of the future, he could not have known, as none can tell what even the next day or hour will bring forth, what an important part Flying Fish and Little Wolf would play in connection with his own well-being, as a result of his kindly interest in them. For as it afterward happened it was solely because of their having been instigated to go in quest of game with only such weapons as they possessed, that they made their appearance at a distant point one day when their young white friend greatly needed them.

Gentle Maiden and the Quaker had finished the distribution of dried venison brought from the cabin by the time John had concluded his talk with the two Indian lads and others who clustered around to see and to hear, and as an early homeward start was desirable, John suggested to Mr. Hatch that they would better be going.

No word had yet been received at the Delaware town from Captain Pipe and there was no knowing when he would be home. However, provisions sufficient to last the Indians three or four days had now been furnished them, and there would be no necessity of visiting the town so soon again. Yet the Quaker, whose whole heart was in this work of teaching and caring for the Indians, which he had taken upon himself, told Gentle Maiden he would come again the next day, as they bade the girl and the people of the snow-bound village good-bye.

As when on their journey to the town Mr. Hatch and his dapple-gray led the way, so did they take the lead in traveling homeward. The

wind had risen again, but the path broken in the morning was not yet filled in with the snow and very good progress was made. The short day, however, was near its close and the gloom of the coming night settled down in the silent forest while the strangely mated travelers were still three miles or more from home.

"I'll have some news to tell Ree—the fact that the mysterious Indian's name is Killdeer and that he is a friend of Captain Pipe, who for some reason doesn't mind who he kills," John was thinking as he rode carelessly along, when the Quaker called out to him:

"Beware of the strange savage who desireth only to kill, and hath no courage in him—always shooting from behind."

"He's got you marked up on his arm as already dead, you know, Mr. Hatch, and you should be in no danger," John laughingly called in reply.

But barely had he finished the sentence when he was seized from behind and a dirty hand was clasped so quickly and tightly over his mouth

that he could not utter a sound. Vainly he struggled, but he was dragged down into the snow and could not release himself.

So occupied was John in doing his best to escape, or at least to cry out in warning to the Quaker, that he did not see what had happened to his companion.

The facts were that Mr. Hatch's mare, being very much more sensitive and alert than slow-going Neb, had suddenly shied upon passing a large poplar tree, and as a man sprang from behind it to seize him, as another seized John, the horse gave so violent a leap forward that the fellow grasped only at the air, though his intended victim was almost thrown from the saddle.

The old gentleman looked around, and seeing John's horse, startled from its slow walk to a gallop, coming up behind, and having no doubt that the boy was lying low on the animal's back to escape whatever danger threatened, he gave his mare free rein. On and on he hastened through the snow, followed by the frightened

unridden horse, nor did he stop until, dazed by excitement, the dapple-gray panting and perspiring as though it were a hot day in July, he drew up at the cabin door.

Meanwhile John's captor had been reinforced by the fellow who had failed to catch the Quaker.

"Nice mess you made of the job, I must say!" angrily growled the man who held John down, the lad's face buried in the snow, as the other man came up.

By a vigorous squirm, rising partly on his hands and knees, John succeeded in turning over and getting his first look at the fellow who had seized him. Instantly he recognized the "Indian" who had visited the cabin, still in Indian costume, though there was no doubt that his skin was white.

"So it is you, is it, Duff?" said the boy calmly as he could. "I would recognize your angelic temper anywhere."

Duff paid no attention to the remark, save to hold his captive the tighter, but continued to

upbraid his companion for failing to secure the "blasted, pious old fool of a Quaker."

"Ain't no use jawin'; nobody never did nothin' what they couldn't do," the other man made answer.

"And you, too, Dexter," John spoke up. "We had a nice visit with Mr. Duff, the other evening, and wished you could have come along. And how is it that Landlord Quilling is not with you?"

CHAPTER XV.

THE SEARCH.

The feelings of Return Kingdom when he saw the Quaker come galloping up to the cabin door, his beloved mare wet with perspiration, and closely followed by their own horse, riderless, were different than he had ever experienced. He had never known the true meaning of fear and never had he known a moment when his courage and hope seemed to desert him so entirely as now.

There flashed upon his mind a picture of John Jerome's body stretched in the snow as he had seen Quilling's; of the lone Indian stooping over it to secure the awful trophy of his silent warfare against the whites. With his old-

time determination, however, the lad shook off these fearful thoughts, and as Theodore Hatch's feet touched the ground, was at his side.

"John—?"

Ree could not ask the question in his mind. His voice sunk to a husky whisper.

"Verily, I do not know," said the Quaker in hushed, frightened tones. "I thought he was on his horse until but a little while ago. An Indian attacked me and I escaped. I thought thy friend was coming on behind till I chanced to look back, a mile from here."

"Tell me all about it just as quick as you can, Mr. Hatch." There was pleading and yet an imperative command in Kingdom's voice.

"We were midway betwixt here and the Indian town, but I scarce know what happened. A savage in hiding behind a tree leaped out upon me and would have seized me but Phœbe bounded beyond his reach, nor stopped till now. Thy beloved friend was behind me. His horse

kept close up and I thought the lad was with me till but a few minutes since."

"Were no guns fired? Did you hear John cry out?"

"Verily, I know not."

'It may be that John was swept off his horse by the low limbs of a tree," said Ree, hope coming to him with the thought. "Was it the lone Indian—the one you saw before, who attacked you?"

"I cannot say—I cannot say."

The Quaker was trembling violently from his exertion and fright, and Ree pitied him, though he almost despised the man who could give only so wretched an account of what had happened, when information was so badly needed.

"Mount your mare and come after me. Show me the place where you were attacked."

Kingdom seized his rifle, which was always within reach, and at one bound was upon Neb's back. The Quaker began a protest, but the lad did not—would not—hear. It was now quite dark and the howling wind and penetrating cold

added to the hardship of the work to be done and lessened the likelihood of success; but the man dared not disobey the boy's command.

The sweeping gale was fast filling in the path the horses had made along the trail to the Indian town, but the animals themselves were able to find it, though in the darkness the men would not have been. The Quaker recollected the point at which he had first missed John and there Ree dismounted and walked. But it was no use; for, though often he mistook a half-buried log or stump for the body of him he sought, he discovered nothing in the darkness which would indicate whether John had been killed or carried off, or had only fallen, wounded, from his horse.

Not until they had reached the village of the Delawares did the searchers pause in their hunt. Theodore Hatch had been unable to locate definitely the spot at which he was attacked, and Ree pushed on to the Indian town hoping to find some tidings. But neither Gentle

Maiden nor any of the others could give any information.

"Has the lone Indian been seen near here today?"

The question revealed Ree's secret fear.

"He has not been here," the girl answered. "Gentle Maiden would tell the white brother if he had come or gone. His hate is deep, his gun shoots straight. His war is his own war."

There was sadness in the Indian maiden's voice which betrayed her own fears. Thus did she confirm her white friend's belief that John had fallen a victim of the solitary savage whose thirst for revenge upon the whites knew no limit.

What was the reason of the bitter, personal, persistent warfare he carried on? In his heart, as the thoughts stirred his kindly nature to vengefulness, Ree vowed that he would not quit the country of the Ohio until he had killed this lone Indian, and without John he would remain no longer than he should need to complete that task.

The Quaker would have remained in the Indian village for the remainder of the night, and the Indians, roused from their slumbers by the arrival of the white men, invited Ree, also, to stay, but he would not think of it. Back along the trail, therefore, the boy walking, the Quaker astride his mare, the two plodded the weary miles to the cabin again, searching all the way for the body they dreaded to find.

Ree fed the jaded horses when home was reached, and the exhausted Quaker, lying down, was soon asleep, hugging his prized saddle bags with one arm beneath his pillow, as usual.

For the younger man there was no rest. He put the rude snowshoes he had made, in order, and broiled and ate portions of a wild turkey he had caught in the deep snow while making the rounds of their traps in the absence of his chum and Mr. Hatch during the day. He reloaded his two pistols and refilled his powder horn and bullet pouch, then waited.

Impatiently he spent the remaining hour or two until the first sign of daylight, and then,

awakening the Quaker, cautioned him to remain near the cabin and watch closely for any indication of danger. He feared that Duff and Dexter might chance to visit the vicinity, and knew they would not hesitate to kill the old gentleman, to procure his portion of the divided fortune letter, if they found him alone.

The morning was breaking over the bleak, wintry forest as Ree set forth. With two pistols in his belt, his rifle over his shoulder and food and medicine in the pouch hung at his side, he had no concern for his own safety; but he did fear deeply for one he loved more.

He went at once along the trail toward the Indian town, closely scrutinizing the drifted snow and the trees and bushes on both sides thereof. Nowhere did he find the least encouragement until he came to a great poplar tree about which there was evidence that the snow had been disturbed and tramped down the day before, though the traces were now well-nigh obliterated.

The place answered to the meager description

Theodore Hatch had given of the spot at which the assault was made, but in his uncertainty the anxious boy knew but one thing to do. He hurried on, resolving, if he found no better clue, to return and look far and wide about this spot in hope of discovering some sign of tracks leading away from it.

With desperate haste the unhappy boy traversed the trail clear back to the Delaware town. The Indians were astir and two boys, Flying Fish and Little Wolf, were preparing to go hunting with bows and arrows. They were equipped with snowshoes and ready for a long journey. Both offered to join the "white brother" in his search, but Ree thanked them and told them only that if they discovered any trace of the missing one to carry word to the town and the cabin as quickly as they could. He would reward them well, he said.

Without loss of time the anxious lad then returned to the big poplar tree beside the trail. Half the forenoon had passed, but the day had come bright and clear with scarcely any wind.

It would have been a glorious day for hunting, but any day must be gloomy when one's best friend is strangely missing, and may be dead or dying, and there was no sunshine in the heart of the lonely boy who traversed the snow-bound forest.

At last, a quarter of a mile to the right of the point where the trail passed the big poplar, Ree did discover, in a protected valley, the tracks of three persons. Minutely he examined them, but the fine snow had so sifted in that he could not tell whether they were those of Indians or otherwise, or whether or not John might have made any of the footprints. He hastened in the direction in which they led, however, though surprised to see that they would pass only a mile or so to the eastward from the cabin, unless the course changed.

As a more open portion of the forest was reached, the last evidence of the tracks disappeared. Still Ree kept on. He saw that he would come out somewhere in the sheltered valley of the Cuyahoga, if he continued in the di-

rection he had first taken, and if he found no one in hiding there, as he believed he might, since the valley gave protection from the winds and snow, he might at least discover the lost trail there, in some of the sheltered places.

As time proved, Ree's decision was wise. He had gone scarcely a half mile farther when he came upon fresh tracks in the snow. They were those of but two persons apparently, and of Indians, the young pioneer believed; but he remembered that frequently in traveling Indians take great care to step in the footprints of one another and thus conceal their real number from any one discovering their trail, and he took up this fresh clue at increased speed. Five minutes later he caught sight of two figures ahead of him. One was a white man, he judged from the dress, the other an Indian.

"Ho, brothers! What's your hurry?" the boy called.

The men stopped and looked back. Both were Indians, Ree then saw, though one was dressed in the clothing of a white man.

"How?" called one of them.

"White Fox—white brother—how?" the other of the Redmen exclaimed, and Ree then recognized them as Long Arrow and Beaver Hair, the Mingoes whom he had caught in the act of stealing the canoe he and John had purchased the year before of Captain Pipe. Moreover, he discovered, as he approached, that the fellow in white men's clothing was wearing the identical suit which he had seen the robber, Duff, wear. It was easy to guess then how Duff had come by the Indian costume he wore on his recent visit to the cabin.

"Tell me where I will find the white brother with whom you traded clothes," said Ree, as he shook hands with the Indians. "His name is Duff and he now wears the dress of the Mingo for no good purpose."

"Ugh," was the only answer the Indians made. They could not understand how the white lad could tell at once with whom the exchange had been made.

"No see Spotted Face—Spotted Face no

friend of young brother White Fox," said Long Arrow, who wore Duff's clothes.

It was Duff whom he called "Spotted Face," referring to the marks the smallpox had left.

"Spotted Face ask Long Arrow and ask Beaver Hair to burn house of white brothers," put in the other Indian. "Say white brother killed Black Eagle."

Here was news of a very interesting kind. Duff, then, had been trying to turn these two Indians against himself and John, had he? These were Ree's thoughts.

"Spotted Face say give heap firewater—heap money—for Long Arrow and Beaver Hair to carry off white brother and hide him in cave where Spotted Face has his bed," Long Arrow said.

This was more interesting news. Duff, it may have been, had kidnaped John, after having failed to prevail upon the Indians to do it.

"And my Mingo friends would not do so," Ree answered, shaking hands with the savages

again. "I thank you both; and Spotted Face—"

"Tongue of Spotted Face speaks crooked—crooked as snakes when asleep," said Beaver Hair, referring to serpents which lie coiled when sunning themselves. "Because Killdeer—him you call the lone Indian—saw Spotted Face kill Black Eagle. Young white brother not kill Black Eagle. Killdeer saw him die."

What in the world would he next hear of this marvelous lone Indian who seemed in all places at all times? So thought Ree, deeply impressed by the pointed climax his Indian friends had reached. Inwardly, as the thought flew upon his mind, he thanked fortune that the vanishing savage had at least been the means of thwarting the design of the unscrupulous Duff to turn these Mingoes against himself and John, by telling them of the cruel murder of kind old Black Eagle.

"Does Duff—Spotted Face—know that Killdeer saw him strike the Black Eagle down?" Ree asked, glad to know the name of the solitary savage, at last.

The Indians shook their heads.

"Killdeer get him bime-by," said Long Arrow significantly. "Killdeer's war is his own war."

And here was still more to set Ree to thinking—two Mingoes, not especially friendly with the Delawares, saying of the lone Indian just as Gentle Maiden had said, "His war is his own war." What was the secret of it all? He asked Long Arrow and he asked Beaver Hair then and there. Neither would answer.

"Killdeer has not shot at me nor at your other white brother for a long time," said Ree. "Has he no war against us?"

"Yes, Killdeer has," was the answer. "He be heap bad—kill anybody—get many scalps."

This was not very pleasant information, but time was passing and Ree could not press his inquiries further. He asked the Indians whether they had seen the trail of any persons in the woods, and they answered that they had not. He told them briefly then of John's disappearance, but they did not volunteer to help him

in his search, and bidding them good-bye, he hastened on, eating some dried venison as he went.

The unhappy lad's mind was filled with conflicting thoughts. Was it the mysterious savage, Killdeer, or was it Duff who had attacked John and the Quaker? Why should Duff have wished to have John kidnaped? The questions were still puzzling him when suddenly he discovered another freshly-made trail in the snow. The tracks were those of a man, but whether Indian or Paleface he could not tell.

"A white man, I should guess from their size," the boy was saying to himself, "Indians nearly always have small—"

"Stand!"

It was the voice of Duff, and as Ree looked up, startled by the unexpected command, he gazed at the muzzle of a rifle in the hands of that scoundrel, not a score of yards distant.

"I've been hunting you this good while, and now, by the eternal, I've got ye," the villain said.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CAVE OF THE FORTUNE HUNTERS.

"Get up!"

It was Duff who spoke, and he accompanied the command with a volley of oaths.

In wonderfully quick time Duff went through John's pockets and the pouch which hung at his belt, taking everything he found, which, fortunately, was nothing more than a hunting knife and pistol.

"Take his gun and push out fast, ahead, Dexter. I'll follow close behind, and you, young fellow, keep just behind your good friend here, and just ahead of me, and attempt no monkey business, or I'll blow your brains out! Now, march!"

With a quick glance around to get his bearings, John walked off as Dexter led the way. He noticed regretfully that it was now quite dark in the woods, and the wind was again blowing so hard that their tracks through the snow would be quickly obscured.

For hours, it seemed to John, the silent march continued. At first he knew just where he was, but as it became darker and wolves howled not only on one but on all sides, and the wind swirled and swept so in all directions that he could not keep his bearings, he lost all knowledge of his whereabouts except to know that he was in a very unpleasant predicament, to say the least, and he wished heartily that he was out of it.

It was almost midnight, as nearly as John could judge, when, after winding in and out for some time through dark ravines, whose rocky walls rose high above their heads, making the darkness so intense that they could scarcely see the snow at their feet, Duff and Dexter mounted to a rough ledge four or five

feet above the level of the valley in which they were, and dragged their captive up after them. He knew at once, as he found a low, rocky roof above his head, that they were in the mouth of a cave of some sort.

"Make a light," commanded Duff, and stepping forward he seized John's arm, as if afraid the boy might attempt to escape.

Dexter, obedient to his chief's order, knelt in the darkness and by much puffing and blowing kindled a small fire from a few live coals remaining of a blaze the two men evidently had left when starting out.

"Get something to eat," was the next order of the captain, and Dexter slunk away to another part of the cave.

While he waited by Duff's side John made as thorough an inspection of the cave as he could by the flickering firelight. It did not appear very deep though the roof was twice as high as a man, and its yawning mouth extended nearly its entire width of probably twenty feet. Still comparatively little snow

had drifted in and the floor was dry and hard. In one corner not far from the fire was a pile of leaves on which some skins and blankets were spread, while hanging on the forks of a sapling cut off half way up and now leaning against the wall, were a frying pan and other cooking utensils.

"Kind of ghost-like around here," the boy remarked, smiling grimly as the firelight cast spectral shadows in the deeper parts of the cavern and upon the rough walls. "Seems to me I can see the ghosts of Quilling and Black Eagle right now."

"Dry up! Blast your noisy tongue, dry up!" growled Duff beneath his breath, while involuntarily he shuddered and glanced around.

"Oh, what a guilty conscience," thought John, mentally resolving to make use of this discovery that his captor was afraid of ghosts, if the opportunity came to him.

Their meager supper of venison over, Dexter, at Duff's command—it seemed that the former was obliged to do all the physical

labor—brought stout thongs of twisted buckskin and John was speedily bound hand and foot, and then pushed and thrown upon the bed of leaves and skins in the corner. Duff and Dexter also lay down, one on either side of the prisoner.

It was daylight when John awoke, the bonds upon his wrists and ankles instantly, painfully reminding him of where he was and bringing to his mind the unhappy recollection of all that had happened. Neither Duff nor Dexter was on the bed beside him, and, rolling over, he looked around. There sat Dexter on the log by the fire.

"Hi, there!" called John.

"Jest don't you say nothin'. I'm to knock yer blasted brains out if ye holler, er say a word. Them's Duff's own words. Lay still an' don't say nothin' an' I won't do ye no harm, an' I'll git ye a bite to eat."

So saying Dexter sliced off a few cuts of meat from a nearly consumed fore quarter of a deer and prepared it for the prisoner.

"It was too bad Quilling was killed the way he was," said John, as he ate, wishing to appear friendly, for he believed Dexter was not at heart nearly so villainous as his companion.

"Bub, jest you shet up. Ye ain't allowed to say nothin'. Them's the orders."

But after a pause of several minutes, Dexter added: "Duff didn't say as I couldn't talk none, though, an' I kin say yes, 'twas too bad as Quilling got killed. But it was his own fault. When Duff goes to yer hut as an Injun, plannin' to get what he was after, an' left me an' Quilling at the edge o' the woods t' help him if he needed it, or to draw you chaps out some way, an' give him a better chance, if he didn't come back by midnight, Quilling an' me stood under a tree with low limbs where we wouldn't be seen by anybody. Then Quilling got scared—allus was a blamed baby anyhow,—an' he begun to chatter an' talk 'bout how he wished he had stayed to home. 'An' I'm goin' to holler to Duff this minute that I want t' go home an' he's got t' go with

me,' he says, speakin' up loud. An' with that he steps out into the clearin', when 'bang!' he tumbled over like a rabbit, an' in a jiffy there come pouncin' onto him a devil of an Injun that has been hangin' round these parts a long time.

"An' this Injun ain't no nat'ral critter at all. He comes an' goes too quick fer that. He's a Injun witch, that's what he is, an' 'fore I knew it I was yellin' 'help,' an' hootin' like a owl, which was the sign agreed on to call Duff out if we had to have him; an' then I goes racin' into the woods like all get out. Duff comes runnin' after me, cursin' awful, he was that mad. But he knew Quilling was a goner an' we—we jest lit out fer our cave here. We was watchin' from the woods when you an' the Quaker chap started out to the Injun town an' then it was that Duff says we would ketch ye, an' we did, an' what's next to be did is fer me to know an' you to find out, as the sayin' is."

John, it is sure, was greatly interested in

what he had heard. And now, as Dexter showed no signs of speaking further, though he seemed to like to hear his own tongue going, the captive tried hard to think of some seemingly innocent question or remark which would start the fellow talking once more. At last he said:

"Honest truth, Mr. Dexter, I was not spying on you that night away back at the Eagle tavern when I went for a drink of water and found you and Duff and Quilling reading a letter."

"Young feller, you keep still. Don't you say nothin'; that's what! But ye needn't think Duff lays it up ag'in ye that ye came onto us sudden-like that night at Quilling's place. He don't remember nothin' about it, I don't s'pose. Why, him an' me had only got to Quilling's that same night; an' of course we didn't know what Quilling wanted till we got there. He was jest a-goin' to show us that letter or piece o' one, when you chaps come along. Quilling didn't know himself

jest what the thing meant, but he knew it told about money buried in the ground an' he knew that this chap Nesbit had done good business liftin' jew'lry an' coin from folks along the roads an' places. He knew enough to guess pretty straight as how Duff would be the man to help find the other part of the letter, 'cause he had seen Nesbit have it, an' he sent fer him, an' Duff an' me went together. But while yer talkin', boy, only ye ain't allowed to talk none, an' I'll knock yer blasted brains out if ye do, this here ain't my reg'lar trade, an' I vow, if there's much more killin' an' slavin' fer Duff, I'm a-goin' t' quit it."

Dexter paused and put a few sticks of wood on the fire.

"It's 'bout time Duff was comin' back," he said, as he sat down again. "Duff's gone to hunt yer pardner an' if he don't give him what he wants, he's goin' to knock yer blasted brains out an' scalp ye jest the same as though that Injun witch had did it, an' it'll be laid onto the Injun. Duff's wrote a letter on bark

with charcoal that says that, an' now ye know what yer chances be."

John was far from comfortable as he learned Duff's monstrous plan. He could not believe that Ree would surrender the letter, which was not his property, but the property of Theodore Hatch, without a struggle, and he knew that Duff would not hesitate to kill. The result, it was all too likely, would be that Duff, in one of his furious passions would commit murder and John Jerome would never greet his friends again.

"Ye see I was jest a farm hand an' never was in the line as Duff was in, until he got me into this one, sayin' it would only be a job of findin' a box o' gold buried in the ground, an' I could handle a spade so good," Dexter continued, talking as though to himself. "But it ain't been like he said. I ain't no coward like Quilling, but if this here scheme Duff's now workin' don't do the business, I'm goin' to quit—I'm goin' to quit."

Dexter shook his head gloomily. It was un-

doubtedly a "blue" day for him. He rose and walked out just beyond the mouth of the cave.

"I'm goin' to quit," the fellow murmured despondently again, and his words were as a prophecy.

From a clump of bushes above, at the top of the steep hill across the ravine, clearly visible through the bare, gray trees, there came a puff of smoke; a rifle sounded, and Dexter, shading his eyes with one hand, looking down the valley in search of Duff, whom he would see never again, sprang high into the air. As though it were some inanimate thing his body fell backward at full length upon the ground, and from his temple trickled a tiny stream of crimson, staining the snow.

So ended the life of Dexter. If the thrilling adventures that awaited John Jerome, his prisoner, and Return Kingdom on the edge of civilization urge you to further reading, turn with me the pages of *"The Lone Indian"* that together we may learn the full history of the little cabin on the banks of the Cuyahoga.

W. B. C.